Volume 1

Chapter 1

I don't want to die.

I don't want to die.

These are the only thoughts that occupy my mind as I keep moving.

With each of my steps, the sound of cracking snow reaches my ears.

I cannot say how long I have been walking.

One thing is certain, all I see around me is a vast silvery expanse dotted with trees with pointed leaves.

Impossible to guess how far I have left to go to this "neighboring town" that Cora told me about.

Damn, I hardly feel anything in the limbs anymore. What could be more normal after three days of walking without eating or drinking anything. At this rate, hunger and cold will get the better of me before white lead disease.

My body is heavy and sleep weighs on me. The idea of simply letting myself fall in the snow, so that I might be able to end it without suffering too much crosses my mind.

No, I don't have to.

If I die, my benefactor's efforts will never be rewarded. He who struggled, ran from hospital to hospital in order to heal me, finally died there. Corazon will never rest in peace.

I take a scalpel out of the little bag hanging from my waist. And there ...

- Aaah!

I deliberately lacerate my left arm.

- There ... Like that, goodbye sleep!

After having dressed my wound, I resume my walk. In my condition, a boar or wolf attack would be fatal for sure, but I try not to think about it.

I continue my journey towards the city.

Towards this "neighboring town"where Corazon and I have made an appointment.

Lights...

Yes, there is no doubt that it sounds like city lights.

Saved, I am saved!

Right when uttering these words, I feel my step relieve a weight. Once there, I will find something to eat, I can swallow a hot soup and sleep soundly on a soft mattress!

A few running steps and here I am already at the foot of the outer brick walls. On the sign hanging at the entrance is written in large: "Pleasure Town". So that's the name of the "neighboring town". I did not realize it from afar, but the place is full of people. It reassures me, I tell myself that if I call out to one of them, he will surely lead me to his place where I can rest warm.

I run at full speed. I rush towards people to stop someone.

But suddenly, I freeze, my legs no longer respond.

I remain dumbfounded, standing at the entrance to the city, and suddenly remember everything that has happened to me so far.

I remember the persecution suffered because of the white lead disease.

The hatred of people, their restrangement, the wounds they caused, it all comes back to me.

All these memories that I would like to forget resurface one after the other.

The quarantine of Flevance, my hometown nicknamed the White City, by those people who believed white lead disease was contagious.

The government that abandoned us, the war that began, and my father, my mother, my sister and my church friends who were murdered.

I also remember my flight, hidden in a mountain of corpses.

In the despicable way we were treated when Corazon and I toured the hospitals.

Memories all more miserable than eachother.

The day my town was burnt down and my loved ones killed, I decided that I would no longer believe in anything or anyone.

When I subsequently joined Doflamingo and the Don Quijote Family, it was only because before I died, I wanted to turn the world upside down.

I only had one thing left: despair.

However, Corazon was the only one to cry for me.

The only one to cry and, in his sobs,to pronounce my name.

While, for me, this world was nothing more than the anteroom to hell, and I thought I had nothing more to hope for from anyone, the way Cora acted towards me prompted me to give them a second chance to people and to believe in the human again.

But now my body refuses to move.

I am afraid to enter this city which is teeming with people.

I tell myself that if it happens, they will be hitting me again. That I will be hurt even more than I have ever known.

Just thinking about it causes fear in me cuts my legs and makes me tremble.

Despite everything, I manage to take one step, then two, and enter the city. I advance a little and I speak to a person in the process of removing snow:

- Uh ... Excuse me!

- Ah, hello ... But, your face ...

Damn, I'm discovered. She knows I have white lead disease. I can already see her gaze assail me. A look of hatred. A look that always expresses the same thing: you sons deserve to live.

- A ... Wait!

I hear this woman's voice, but I don't stop. I keep running until I come out of town. I did not find the courage to continue this conversation.

What a lousy thing.

Cora. Looks like despite all the love you gave me, I still can't trust people.

I wander aimlessly before entering a cave sighted near the seaside. Here, I should be able to stand the cold. My stomach is growling, I wish I had something to eat. Luckily, I found a bunch of dry branches that had fallen near the cave and spared by snow. I can see thick and thin ones.

I pick a few good skinners and use the spin method to start a fire. How ironic that a survival technique learned within the Don Quijote Family could be of use to me at such atime. I bring my hands closer to the crackling flames. Aah, a Little warmth.

However, now is not the time to praise me. I tell myself that I should hunt to get a good piece of meat, but I'm at the end of my rope and this choice definitely doesn't seem very realistic to me. So I tie a thread to the end of a branch chosen at random, dig the ground in search of an earthworm that I in turn hang, and drop my line in the sea from the nearest cliff . Despite the poor quality of my improvised fishing rod, I immediately caught two beautiful, very fatty fish.

I'm too hungry, I won't hold out any longer. I hurry back to the cave, where I empty the fish before skewering them and cooking them. A pleasant smell arises from my brazier. Um, that sounds good. I will swallow these fish in order to regain my strength. Then I will sleep a bit before considering the rest.

As I think about it all, a violent pain invades my body.

My limbs, my head, my back, it hurts all over. Bad enough to want to scream. I find it more and more difficult to breathe. Bad luck, I knew it could fall on me at anytime. I should have been more careful.

Three years and two months. This is the calculation I made from the medical data left by my parents, my life span from the day I caught white lead disease. Almost three years have passed since then. At the time when I was traveling alongside Corazon, it happened to me to have a crisis that it would not be surprising that I die from one moment to another!

So what? What should I do?

Certainly, I ate the fruit of the scalpel. According to Corazon, it seems that whoever swallows it becomes capable of rearranging bodies at will and curing any disease.But it is not for all that a fruit that confers magical powers. The mere fact of eating it does not allow you to heal.

Until I learn to harness his powers, I will remain helpless.

Piss off!

Spontaneously, I hit the ground with my fist. I have fever too. I smell death, it's right there. You know that feeling that all your strength has left you? My legs wobble, I stagger and fall backwards.

Chapter 2

No, I must not give up.

Cora paid for the fruit of the scalpelI inherited with his life.

It was for me, to save me that he seized it and was killed.

I owe myself ...

I owe it to myself to live! Otherwise his death will have served no purpose! And that, I refuse!

I scream. As if I could draw a line on Cora's kindness, on that last smiling face which he gave me before dying!

Plom ...

Without warning, my pulse intensifies.

Plom, plom ...

My heart is beating violently.

Plom, plom, plom, plom, plom, plom,plom, plom, plom, plom, plom...

It is as if my whole body has started to pump blood.

Still, hard to believe that it can be dangerous.

On the contrary, everything happens as if this latent force which was dormant in me was awakening little by little.

Voom. A loud thud is heard in turn.

By the time I realized it a dome-shaped circle appeared with me in its center.

What is this thing ?!

Strangely, I was able to see everything in the dome. As if I could even peer inside my own body. I close my eyes and concentrate. My brain, my heart, my lungs, my stomach, my small intestine, my large intestine, my spleen ... I understand everything. From the location of each of my organs, through my muscles and to my nervous system, I feel like I can touch everything with my hand.

So that's it ... the power of the scalpel fruit!

It's not just about my own body. I instinctively understand that I am able to modify whatever is inside the dome as I see it. I am free to make the objects move, or else to intervene. This dome I am telling you about becomes in my eyes an operating table.

With that, I should be able to do it!

So, while I am on the verge of dying, I feel the heat come over me again. I'm going to show him what I'm up to with this white lead disease. A deep determination shakes my whole body.

I close my eyes and mobilize my mind once again. Since white lead disease occurs because of too much lead in the body, it would be enough for me to extract the lead to be cured. I then embark on a careful check of each of my organs. Arrived at the liver, I see that this is where the lead has accumulated.

I move to the barrel in the cave and only remove the liver from my body. No pain. The most natural way in the world was to remove one of my organs myself. I put the latter on the barrel in question.

Good, and now ...

Out of the question to have my liver completely removed. This gesture, like the white lead disease, would only cause my death. I must therefore remove the lead contained in my liver. and put it back inside my body. To begin with, I decided to collect in a single point the lead dispersed all over the organ. Then I take a scalpel out of my satchel.

Now is the time to put into practice what my parents taught me, as well as what I learned on my own. One thing to know, however: human organs are insensitive to pain. But the one that I extracted with my power being linked to my body, if I hurt it, I will feel the pain through the membrane that covers it.

Phew, I take a deep breath. Impossible to imagine the degree of suffering that awaits me. If I had known, I would have taken an anesthetic with me.

It's okay, I'm ready. With my right hand, I plant the scalpel in my liver.

Waaah!

A terrible pain overwhelms me. I have the impression that a powerful current runs through my body tearing my mind!

Haa, haa, haa...

Still, I can't stop. I cling to what is left of me and cut off with a sharp blow the piece of my liver which contains all the lead. I let out again a cry of pain, and wonder if this one will not kill me before the disease.

But no, this is not the time to let go. I have to finish what I started. I take a needle and thread from my satchel and, after stitching up the wound, I put my liver back into my body.

Operation completed.

The effects are immediate. Following the extraction of lead, I feel the pain and fever gradually leaving me. The operation is a success, my life is saved.

Did you see that, Cora? I brilliantly managed to handle the fruit of the scalpel that you collected for me! Thanks to you, it is not yet today that I will die!

In the cave, I cry without restraint. I tremble so much with joy that I will almost forget my pain.

I hardly have time to reassure myself that I feel sleep assault me.

No matter how much I light the fire, now is a really bad time to faint. But I'm at the end of my rope. I... I need to ... get some sleep ...

In the haze of my thoughts, I see Cora standing in front of me.

As always, he's wearing a black hood, funny makeup, and I imagine him smiling.

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It is good where I am.

I am wrapped in something sweet.

I feel like I had a happy dream, but I forgot the content.

Little by little, I regain consciousness.

When I open my eyes, I am lying in a bed, under a wooden ceiling that I see for the first time.

Or ... where am I?

I stand up and look around. This room contains a desk and chair, a library full of books, anaquarium in which a goldfish swims, as well as an imposing fireplace where a fire burns. Everything seems to indicate that I was taken to someone's house.

As I am thinking about all this, the door to the room opens with a thud.

- Oh, you're finally awake.

An unknown old man has just entered with a tray on which is placed a bowl of soup. At first glance, I would say he is sixty years old. His long white hair is slicked back, he wears an all-red visor, an exotic shirt, Bermuda shorts and sandals. The kind of guy who, even looking from all angles, remains shady. But above all, first of all, I would like to point out to him that it is the middle of winter, that it is snowing and that his look is far from being adapted to the season.

Regardless, that's not the problem. What concerns me most is who he really is. Thanks to Cora who had planned everything, Doflamingo and the Family firmly believe that the Navy has taken me under its wing. But if they find out I'm not the boy in question, they'll look for me all over Swallow Island and do anything to catch me.

This is how much Doflamingo wants to get his hands on the fruit of the scalpel. And if he thinks of offering an additional bounty for my capture, then I wouldn't be surprised to see a whole bunch of bandits attempting to hand me over to him.

Regarding this, it is evenquite possible that the old man in front of me will quietly wait for the arrival of the Family after having contacted her.

- You must be hungry, he told me.

He walks over and puts the bowl of soup for me on the corner of the bed. A delicious smell tilts my nostrils, I swallow my saliva. I haven't eaten anything for several days and must refrain from jumping on this soup.

Instead of bringing the bowl to my mouth, I grab my scalpel and find myself on the man's back in the blink of an eye. While I block him at the level of the neck with my left arm, with the other hand I position my weapon on his throat.

- What are your intentions, old man?

It is not because I have not yet regained all my strength that I am going to let a little old man take the lead. I ask him what his goal is, but he remains impassive.

- Well, since you don't leave me the choice ... humf!

Ouch!

The next moment, I'm in the air, before falling violently to the ground. What the hell happened?

- Even though I got older, I used to be more of the shack type. It's not a kid running behind my back that will make me put my knee on the ground.

In all likelyhood, the old man has just sent me waltzing in the air. He's right, I'm a kid, but a kid trained in combat within the Family. This is perhaps what made me lower my guard.

I get up at full speed and place myself in front of him. In a way to intimidate him, I open my eyes wide and stare at his.

- You are in a very bad condition. You look like a hungry wild beast.

Without giving the impression of wanting to attack me, the old man takes the bowl of soup and the spoon before approaching me.

- Eat. When I found you, you were completely frozen. I'm guessing you haven't eaten anything for a long time.

My God, that sounds good. In this brownish soup, I also saw pieces of meat, chicken or beef, I don't know. Without forgetting the colorful vegetables which finish whetting my appetite.

But I'm scared.

If so, he tries to get me to ingest sleeping pills in order to save time until Doflamingo arrives. I will no longer be imprudent and no longer give my trust to anyone.

- Wondering if I didn't put anything weird in it, eh? You have a hard time trusting others, from what I see.

I try at all costs to keep my gaze on him, without answering anything. It was then that, before my eyes, he tastes the soup. First a gorge, then two. It looks good.

- There you go, now you know it is not poisoned. You don't have to worry, I don't mean harm to you. I don't want to be vigilant, but neither am I so vicious that I take it out on a boy on the brink of death.

So saying, the old man hands me the bowl of soup again. All the while I was unconsciously keeping the spoon in my left hand. With the scalpel to the right, its flavor oozes my mouth. I have the impression that all that it contains nourishing elements permeates my body little by little.

When I realize this, I am already crying. Thanks to this soup so hot and so good, I realize that my life is saved. A whole whirlwind of emotions that I can hardly contain and that makes me shed tears.

- Bug, I'm enjoying it ... It's so good!

No way to stop eating. I putmy scalpel on the side and swallow without even chewing the pieces of meat and vegetables available to me. Up to the last drop. Is it because I was hungry? In any case, at this time, this soup is in my eyes is the most precious meal that I have been given to eat. The man then addresses me laughing:

- Stay there, I'll find something to serve you again.

I have the impression of being an abandoned cat that he has taken in and who is starting to get attached to his new owner.

On his advice, I go take a bath. Aaah, how long hadn't this happened to me? The only memories I have of recent times are those of my long walk in the snow in search of this damn "neighboring town". For the first time, I realize how pleasant it is to take a good hot bath.

Aah…

Chapter 3

As I wash, I look at myself in the mirror and see a big change.

They have disappeared... The white spots due to white lead disease have disappeared, my skin is back to how it was before!

Patting my face allows me to become convinced that I am well and truly healed.

The tranquility, that inner peace that I felt then, that of no longer being afraid of white lead disease, I haven't felt it for years.

All the muscles in my body relax and I fully and simply enjoy the heat of my bath.

When I leave, even a change awaits me.

- These are my son's clothes, I did well to keep them. They have lived, but can still be used.

After changing, we each sit on a chair facing each other. Only, the palpable tension which was floating in the air a few moments before has completely disappeared. For my part, my distrust of this old man has also dissipated.

- Say ...

- Yes?

- Did you actually save my life?

- Hmmm! I was coming back from town and heard a loud cry coming from the cave. It disturbed me, so I went to see, and I ran into you, a lonely kid, collapsed on the floor. I'm not telling you about the bad conscience that I would have paid myself if I had left you to die there, so I took you to sleep here.

- I see...

What a story! This old gentleman is neither a Doflamingo henchman nor a bounty hunter, and he rescued me out of goodwill. I suddenly feel so silly.

- Old man...

- Yes?

- Thank you for helping me out of this mess.

- Pah! Don't be naive! The world is made that it's „give and take", kid. You owe me a debt now. I hope you understand?

- Yes.

- In that case, tell me a bit about yourself. I can then erase your slate. For a child to find himself alone in a cave, in this season, collapse on the ground, there is necessarily a reason.

I agree to his request and start talking to him about what I have experienced, in bits and pieces.

I tell him that I was born and raised in Flevance, nicknamed the "white city", that my parents taught me about medicine. That one day white lead disease spread, and the city was abandoned by the government. I tell him that war has broken out, that my parents and my sister are all burnt to death. I also relate my contamination, my despair towards the world and my entry into a pirate crew. Finally, I tell him about the one who saved me, Corazon, my benefactor.

As I recall my memories in order, I feel my heart grow lighter and lighter. If so, I had wanted someone to listen to my story for a long time. I'm only evading one thing, the existence of the fruit of the scalpel. I don't want to be seen as a worrying type, nor to be seen in me as a financial windfall. But above all, nothing would be more disagreeable to me than to see the old man's attitude change right before my eyes. That is why I am content to tell him that it is a very talented doctor who cured me.

Once my story ends in broad outline, the old man crosses his arms and remains for a moment immersed in his thoughts, letting out funny noises.

- Very well, I hear. You may be just a kid, but you already live with a hell of a load on your shoulders.

- Stop calling me "kid", I have a name! My name is Trafalgar Law.

- Law, you say. A very elegant name. And so, in short you are alone in the world and you have no place to go or a goal to reach, am I wrong?

A goal. He's right, I don't. For a long time, I had only one idea in mind: to destroy the world. Thanks to Corazon, I set myself the goal of healing, but now that it's done, I wouldn't know what to say if someone asked me about my goal.

- What do you plan to do now?

The old man is asking me the question.

- I don't know, I answer him.

- In that case, he adds, patting his knees, you just have to stay here until you find what you want to do.

- R ... Really?

Nothing could please me more than such an invitation. In an unknown land, without any knowledge and in the total impossibility of entering the city, the perpecitve of being assured of having a bed and hot meals reassures me greatly.

- I hope you haven't forgotten what I told you! Existence is "give and take!" Here is my principle of life! You gonna work for me, you hear me?! The laundry, the housework, the work in the fields! You'll have to give me a handful of hand on my personal work, too! There is so much to do, if you only knew! In exchange for a secure life, you offer me your labor power! Okay?!

Damn it, man. This way of speaking ... It's the only way you can find to express your sympathy, eh? It seems so funny to me, at the time, that I let out a laugh.

- Finally, you decide to show me a smile, he said, laughing in turn.

- Mh? By the way, Ossan, what does this work consist of? Excuse me, but I refuse to be involved in banditry.

- You insolent little one! Who do you take me for, name of a dog ?! As if I indulged myself to this kind of futility.

- Don't worry, I don't take it for anyone. It's just that I have no idea who you are.

- Oooh, of course, I forgot to introduce myself. Since that's how it is, listen carefully and listen! My name is Wolf! Wolf the genius and freaky inventor!

- A brilliant inventor? You?

I look again at his look and the oddly patterned shirt he's wearing. No matter how much I turn the idea all over the place, his outfit is much more like that of a crook than an inventor.

- I see you don't trust me. Wait a minute.

He leaves the room before returning quickly with a box full of curious objects.

- Today is your lucky day. I will present you some of my exceptional inventions! To start, this: The "portable hot spring number 1"! With this invention, it becomes possible to change from cold water to hot water in no time! No need to worry beforehand to prepare your bath!

- Oooh...

He's right, it can come in handy. After all, and despite appearances, the old man may really be genius, in fact ...

- Only there is a flaw. The function to stop the rise in temperature being absent, the water first boils very quickly before evaporating.

- Well, thats bad!

- Wait, wait, I haven't finished. I present to you my next invention: "Super menage No."! It moves on its own depending on the presence of dirt and stains, just put it on the floor for it to clean the house!

Oooh...

- Only there is a flaw. If you use it for more than three minutes in a row, it explodes hard enough to blow an entire house.

- This is no longer a fault, that, your thing is good for the dump!

- In this regard, his predessor "Super household" not knowing the difference between the rubbish and the rest, it almost cost me my right leg ...

- Stop, that's enough! It becomes disgusting!

The old man then presented me several of his inventions, all supplied with defects andcompletely unusable.

- See, I think you now understand the extent of my genius a little better, and ...

- I do not identify that slab, yes! Nothing at all!

- Anyway, from tomorrow you will be responsible for helping me in my research. So remember which devices are flagged as dangerous.

- Seriously? We risk our skin, here, with his stuff.

Ah, damn ... I let out a deep sigh.

But hey, too bad.

- Hey, mister junk.

- I see, you think that's nicer than "Ossan"!

Chapter 4

- I would like to thank you once again for saving my life. I am also grateful to you for allowing me to stay here. Pleased to meet you!

With these words, I extend my right hand to him.

Wolf chuckles, snorting and holding out his hand to me.

- I will make you work until exhaustion! It takes something to honor a "give and take"!

This is how my life began alongside Wolf.

I get up at the same time as the sun, help him working on his inventions and in the fields, devour a lot of books, eat a hot meal, train myself in the handling of the sword with a weapon that he has given me, loaned, and when evening comes, we both chat and laugh.

Our daily life is quiet and peaceful.

I am relatively surprised by the work in the fields. As the winter on Swallow Island is long, its hould in principle be difficult to grow vegetables there. But Wolf built a plastic greenhouse at the back of his house with a function to regulate the temperature and the degree of light, so that he could grow crops all year round.

- So, Law, what do you say ?! Thanks to my "Vege vege no 7", greenhouse cultivation becomes possible! In the future, I would like to grow more to sell my produce in town.

The name of his invention may suck, but the results are worth it. And I must admit that I appreciate my help in the manufacture of objects which can be useful to all.

Some days we also go out hunting together. At first, the idea of seeing this respectable aged person standing alone in front of a wild boar or a deer was not reassuring me, but I quickly noticed that Wolf was belaying with the rifle and that he was almost slaughtering all his targets on the first try. I once asked him why he was shooting so well, but he evaded my question by answering that he once practiced. I didn't look any further.

With Wolf, we have our meals, we laugh and we discuss everything and nothing. However, I refrain from intruding too much on his privacy. Same for him, he is not clingy and does not treat me like a child.

This distance between us suits me perfectly.

Wolf has a habit of going to town once a week to sell his inventions and vegetables, and then to buy the essentials for everyday life. As for me, if possible, I prefer to stay here. No need to force myself to hang out with the people of the city.

At least, that's what I thought.

Wolf is just fine, I'm tired of reading medical textbooks, so I go for a walk to take my mind off things. A month has passed since Wolf took me in, and I have become quite used to what is called a normal life. Despite everything, I remain without a "goal". But I sometimes think that after all, it's not that bad.

As I approach the entrance to the forest, thinking about all this, I see a polar bear and two children.

- Stop! Stop!

The polar bear speaks.

What is that?

Does a talking bear really exist? It's true that I've heard of a talking reindeer before, so after all why not a bear?

At first glance, the irrelationship does not seem very friendly. The two boys keep kicking in the back of the bear which opposes no resistance.

- Hey, hey, he might be a bear, but he's awfully weak! mock the boy in the cap by nudging the animal's head with his elbow.

- Go! Go back wisely to where you come from, in the forest!

This time it's the boy wearing a hat with "Penguin" written on it that hits the bear.

Aah, how stupid they can be.

Faced with this spectacle to say the least unpleasant, I unconsciously click my tongue: "tss". Disturbed by this noise, the two acolytes look in my direction.

- What's wrong with you?! You have a problem? Get out of there! The boy in the cap let go of some of these gangster words.

- No, I don't have a problem. I'm not interested in you or this bear. Do what you want.

- But it is because he dares to fart it, moreover! If there is one thing that I don't like, it's the guys who tell it to each other... So you know what? If you put down everything that you have of value, maybe we'll let go!

This time it's the "Penguin" hat trick to look for me.

No matter where the wind takes me, I always have to run into trouble.

- No more showing off, spill out the money! they shout, both rushing towards me, knife and bat in hand.

„Room"! As I let that word escape in a small voice, a dome-shaped circle appears with me in its center.

- W... What is this?!

- Are we locked up ?!

Perfect, everything works, by dint of training without Wolf's knowledge, I ended up mastering the powers of the scalpel fruit. I can now move and manipulate whatever is inside the circle as I please.

I then grabbed two stones which were at my feet and threw them high into the sky.

And then...

„Shambles"!

The stones and the two boy sexchanged places, the latter two naturally finding themselves floating in the air before falling heavily to the ground and losing consciousness.

Humf...

I was thinking that in addition to medical care, these powers could be effective in combat, but it exceeded all my expectations. But I would feel bad if these two were to die, so I examine them and find that they just passed out.

Well, here's one thing that's settled. Wolf should be home soon, I have to cook dinner.

As I set off towards the house, the polar bear grabs my clothes.

- A ... Wait!

- What?!

- Thank you for coming to my aid. I was so scared that ... that I could not put up any resistance to them ...

- You're welcome, but they were rushing at me, that's why I attacked them. It wasn't to help you.

- It doesn't matter! I'm still super happy!

As he says these words, the polar bear still clinging to my clothes starts to cry. Unbelievable...

Since I don't feel like he's going to let me go anytime soon, we both go to the nearest cave to chat.

- Why haven't you responded to their blows? You are a polar bear, after all, you are certainly stronger than them.

- Yes, but ... They are the ones who came to talk to me.

- So what?

- I thought maybe we could be friends.

- What? Is that what you were thinking while they were hitting you ?!

- Yes. I told myself that if I stayed quiet, if I didn't resist, maybe we would end up becoming friends ...

- “Friends”.

I am hearing that word for the first time in a long time.

I don't have any more friends. They are all burnt to death. For a moment, I remember my family and all my church friends. Aah, that's not a bad memory.

Come to think of it, the presence of this polar bear here, alone, seems strange to me. If that happens, he lives in solitude, without anyone, like me not long ago. It's where I'm starting to get interested in his situation.

- Say, do you live in the area?

- No, I only arrived on this island yesterday. I don't know anyone and I have nowhere to go.

- And before, where did you live?

- In the New World, do you know?

- Yes, I've heard of it before.

Chapter 5

I lived in the Family, so I was very aware of all the stuff concerning the sea. It was there that I learned that the New World was located on the second half of the Grand Line, a road that splits the world in two. All pirates who seek the OnePiece are bound to go there one day or another.

- And so, you, have come here from this New World ?!

The polar bear nods. It is said that almost all the knowledge acquired here is of no value once in the New World. The currents, the weather, the magnetism, everything. Doflamingo taught me that all this information necessary for navigation is totally wrong once there. According to him, this is not a place for hackers and ordinary browsers.

So to reach Swallow Island, which is on North Blue, from there, you need guts ...

- Did you maneuver your boat yourself to get here?

If so, I am in front of a very talented sailor.

- No, not exactly, although I have studied navigation a bit in the past ... In fact, in the New World is the island of Zou.

- The island of Zou? Funny name. Is that where you were born?

- Yes, I belong to the tribe of minks from this island. We lived in peace and I got along well with my family, until the day my big brother suddenly disappeared.

- Without leaving any message?

- No nothing at all. I then made up my mind to go to the sea to search for him. Unfortunately, I got the wrong boat and landed here on North Blue ...

- You surprise me, damn blunder.

- Yes ... In addition to being tossed around in the waves, lightning almost fell on me several times, I really thought I was going to stay there.

- Ha ha ha! What a fool you are! Even a bear that knows how to speak, is still a bear!

Hearing these words, the polar bear suddenly stands up and tries to tie a rope around its neck which is hanging on the ground.

- But no, I was laughing when I called you an idiot! Seriously, you are too fragile of mind, you!

I quickly throw the rope away and console my companion the bear to help him chase away his dark ideas. Honestly, I would have been very annoyed if he took his own life for a simple joke.

- And so, if I understood correctly, you have nowhere to sleep, do you?

- Yes that's it. In fact, I would love to take a boat to the New World, but I don't think I'll find one anytime soon ready to risk such a dangerous region ... As for trying to get there by my own means, regarding my current level of navigation, I would end up swallowed up by the waves before arriving safely.

- So we can say making progress in navigation in order to go in search of your brother is in a way your current "goal"?

- Absolutely.

- Heard, follow me.

- What, but ... Huh ?!

I set off without paying attention to the embarrassed bear who ends up deciding to follow me, timidly.

- By the way, you didn't give me a name.

- My big brother's name is Zepo. In Mink language, it means "handsome kid" ...

- I'm not talking about him, but about you! It's your name I want to know!

- Ah me ?! My name is Bepo.

- Bepo, OK. I like it, it's easy to pronounce. I am Law. Trafalgar Law.

- Law, okay.

- Now that the presentations are done, you are going to shut up and do as I tell you. Bepo. Don't worry, I'm not here to eat you.

- True ... Really? You and your group aren't you planning on using me to cook a bear stew?

- Where you looking for this ?!

After thirty minutes of walking, we arrived at the house. Wolf has already returned.

- Hey, mister junk!

- How many times will I have to repeat this to you ?! Call me Wolf the inventor or genius ... But ... What is this bear doing here ?!

- Ah, this is Bepo. This polar bear got lost. From today he will live with us.

- And what do you do with the owner's agreement ?!

- Come on, be nice. I am sure that he will be of great help to us for the most difficult jobs.

- Nice to meet you, my name is Bepo. Your friend took me here without me knowing why.

- In addition to that, he speeeaks !!

- Easy, junk, you hurt my ears. So, do you want him to stay with us?

- I imagine you have a good reason for bringing him here.

- Without doubt, yes.

- Okay, first of all, let him explain to me how he got here.

For over an hour, Wolf and Bepo talk on the sofa. Without hurrying, the old man asks him questions about his past as well as his family. Once the conversation is over, Wolf heads for the kitchen to prepare tea, which the three of us drink in silence.

Bepo sips his tea looking a little more relaxed than he was before. This does not prevent the spectacle of a bear holding a cup of tea from remaining surreal ...

- Alright, I pretty much got your story, Wolf says suddenly. You want to learn to sail to go find your brother. Hmmm! I find you very close to your family for a bear! But hey, nothing about you seems suspicious to me, and you answered my questions well. You are a good guy.

- So what now?

- Yes, he can stay. But, beware! Don't forget that with me, it's "give and take", Bepo! You will have to work to deserve your pittance, it will not be free! You will have to toil every day if you don't want to be kicked out!

- Tcha ... Tcha tcha! Alright! I will do my best to be of service to you!

Wolf goes to his room, sniffing a bit and adding, "One more kid to feed, that's notgoing to make it any easier for me." I vaguely have the impression of guessing what the old man is thinking.

Because when the latter sniffs, something is rejoicing.

It was decided that Bepo and I would sleep in the same room. As I was the first to move in, I stayed in bed, while Bepo stretched out a futon and slept on the floor.

- Say, Law, why are you so nice to me? Bepo asks me a few moments after turning off the light.

The reason why I am nice? I myself have no idea.

- I acted on a whim, I simply answered.

A line that seems to suit him, because I immediately hear him snoring.

I guess I got interested in him because of his comments about his family.

I happen to think about it. What is family for me? My father who taught me medicine, my mother who was so kind to me, and my sister who continued to laugh despite the illness... But today, everyone is dead.

And since I lost all hope in this world, I stopped thinking about it.

However, I have to admit that lately I've been a bit confused. By the kindness that Wolf shows me, just like by the help I gave to Bepo. As if I wanted to trust others again.

And if I came to see it this way, it is obviously thanks to Cora. Thanks to his efforts and his life he sacrificed to save mine.

What exactly was he for me,Cora?

We were not related by blood, and the time we spent together was relatively short.

In spite of everything, something akin to affection had been woven between us, a bond which required words to be understood.

Will I ever be able to carry affection for someone like that again?

By dint of living alongside Mr. Junk, will I end up carrying him in my heart?

Or, no matter how much time passes, will our relationship remain based on this "give and take", on this idea of mutual profit which is the basis of its philosophy of life?

How should the situation evolve? What should I do to contribute?

Chapter 6

No matter how much I thought about it, I had no idea. And something told me that it would take time, a long time, to find the answer.

***

After a month, it is still snowing.

According to Wolf, the hot season on Swallow Island does not exceed three months. But it doesn't bother me any more than that, I quickly got used to the cold. Anyway, during my saber training or my work in the fields, I sweat naturally. Bepo seems to give a damn about the cold. You will tell me, normal for a bear.

To tell the truth, he is also much more skillful than I would have expected. While helping Wolf in his work, he does the cooking, the dishes, and immerses himself in his studies of navigation as soon as he has some freetime. It is very useful for a bear.

One day, while Wolf was locked in his room of inventions, Bepo and I were harvesting vegetables in the greenhouse. Here we are able to grow plants that cannot be found in winter, and even control the speed at which you want the vegetables to grow. Honestly, hard not to admit that this is an exceptional invention.

- Hey, Law, can I pick those plums too?

- Especially not, moron! What do you plan to do with it? Dried plums, I bet?

- Yes that's it. I love dried plums, they go wonderfully with rice balls.

- Shut up! I don't ever want to hear you say the words "plum" and "dried" in front of me again, get it ?!

- Hiii! Yes, okay, but that's no reason to get upset ...

Raaah, here he is still depressing. This polar bear is really lacking in character. But that doesn't mean I apologize. He didn't have to talk to me about dried plums, period. Frankly, what is this acidity? It makes the tongue wriggle in such an unpleasant way. In my eyes, it is the dried plum, the true fruit of the devil.

In any case, if it is not the bear, it is the old man who will take care of the leather. They will only have to eat them together, that's none of my business.

Suddenly, a loud explosion sounds.

It comes from the forest and must be awfully powerful for it to be heard so far.

- Law!

- Let's go, Bepo!

We leave the greenhouse and we start running in the direction of the forest. Arrived nearby, we soon find the place where the big cloud of smoke rises.

Even though we don't know what is going on, we are aware that it may be an enemy. Carefully, without making any noise, Bepo and I approach the place where the smoke comes from. Voices are heard, voices of children crying.

Arriving in a slightly more open area, we come across two children bleeding profusely and weeping loudly. I recognize them right away, they are the two boys who attacked Bepo the other day. The one in the cap is bleeding from his stomach, while the other with the "Penguin" hat has his right arm ragged from the elbow. I don't know what they did to deserve it.

The situation is serious. Even a novice in medicine would understand right away that these two will die if nothing is done.

- Bepo! Take the one with the cap on your back! I take care of the other! We will bring them home to treat them!

- OK! We must save them at all costs! Bepo answers without any hesitation, who knows however that these two martyred him shortly before ...

We go straight ahead with the children on our backs. I am also holding the right arm of the one covered with the "Penguin" hat.

- Ouch, it hurts ...

Good. He has lost a lot of blood, but appears to be conscious.

- A wild boar rushed over us ... without warning ...

- Shut up and let yourself be carried away wisely!

I interrupt "Penguin"and continue my journey to the house.

- Haa, haa, haa...

It is more and more difficult to breathe. It's not easy to run with all your might while carrying someone. But their wounds are too deep and they've lost too much blood for us to hang around.

- Mister Junk!

I kick open the door and walk into the house.

- Law! You still come back with people without asking my opinion ... Ah, but ... No, you are covered in blood!

- They are all seriously injured! I would like to treat them here!

- Heard! I take care of boiling water! You, focus on the care!

As if responding to the grace that shines in my voice, Wolf also gets to work right away.

We deposit them both on the ground floor, I go to my room to get the necessary to operate, and come back.

- Law, what ... What should I do?

Here is where we are. Bepo's voice reflects his agitation.

- While I take care of treating the one in the cap, you try to stop the other's bleeding! Attach a tourniquet at the joint of his arm and direct it upwards! Then stuff the loose member into a bag full of ice cream!

- Tcha tcha tcha!

I put the boy in the cap who has lost consciousness on the table and observe the depth of his wound. Perfect, the bleeding may well be substantial, the vital organs are not affected. I'm not going to need the powers of the scalpel fruit to heal him.

It all depends on my operating skills.

- Oi, "Penguin", can you hear me?

- Y...Yes...

- Do you know your friend's blood type ?!

Without a transfusion, he will stay there. But a transfusion from an incompatible blood group suddenly causes a devastating reaction. It is first the red blood cells present in the veins that are destroyed, before all the cells of the body are completely destroyed. This is why nothing is more important than knowing the blood type.

- Yes, I know ... It's X, like me ... That's why I remember, there is no doubt ...

- X...

It's bad, it's not my group. And of course, we don't have time to bring in blood.

- Law, take mine! I'm from group X, I'm sure!

- Mister Junk...

He is right, if his group is the same, we can transfuse the two wounded without problem. Only...

- These two boys are bleeding profusely, Wolf. If we want to transfurs them, we will need a large amount of blood. And if we take it all on you, then in the worst case you risk ...

- I know exactly what that means, triple nozzle! And I am ready to take this risk! Who asked you to worry about me, huh? When I was young, during the war, I lost many more and many times. So it's not the amount of hemoglobin needed to cure two kids that will get the better of me!

- It's okay, I got it. I'll use your blood!

At this point, we are in a race against time. I take a syringe and remove a large amount of blood from the old man. I transfer it to a plastic bag, put a needle in the arm of the kid in the cap and make sure that the red liquid drains out duly. I then repeat the same operation on "Penguin".

Good. It's done. Bleeding shouldn't be a problem for us anymore.

- Wolf, are you okay?

I ask him the question, because in spite of having paid careful attention to what I have done, given the quantity of blood of which I have deprived him, a shock is not to be excluded.

- Do not worry about me! It's barely my head spinning. Like a slight anemia, if you know what I mean. So rather than worrying about the old crouton, hurry to take care of their wounds!

- Yes, it's okay, I got it. I thank you anyway.

- "Give and take", do you remember? Next week you and Bepo will be doing all of the housework.

With these words, Wolf collapsed heavily on the sofa in the living room.

Chapter 7

Not to mention that's my job too!

I then delay the powder from special plants in water to inject it into the boy in the cap. This is a strong anesthetic that I made shortly after arriving here. With that, I'm sure he won't wake up during the operation.

Then, with a scalpel previously sterilized in the flame, I cut sharply in his belly. Part of his intestines are affected, but it won't be difficult.

With a quick movement, I suture his wound with a needle and thread, then I check if it is not injured elsewhere. Perfect, nothing to report. Finally, I close the incision made on his stomach.

First wounded, operation completed.

- Bepo! Bring the second one over here!

- Aye!

We move the boy in the cap from the table to the sofa, and place "Penguin" in his place. Is it all the lost blood that prevents him from finding the strength to speak? Still, he is stretched out at full length, inanimate. The difficulty of the operation in which I am about to launch myself in is much more important than the preceding one. Obviously, I could just save his life by suturing the wound and stopping the bleeding, but I really want to sew up his arm so he canuse it again someday.

I don't know why, at this point, I see it that way. Maybe I tell myself that slipping my job would be an insult to medicine and everything I have learned so far. No doubt I also want to act in a way to do honor to my parents who, in the past, managed a hospital with the sole aim of helping people and making them happy.

Yes, that's just that.

Just like I did for the first, I totally anesthetize my second patient, then I take a peel at the wound caused by the exposure in the arm. The fabrics are very damaged, it is not beautiful to see. If a saber or a sword with a limb severed so sharply, the task becomes more complicated.

Will I be able to?

Even the powers of the fruit of the scalpel do not make a joining operation easy. It requires pure knowledge and technique. It is what it is.

I just have to get started.

I don't do it out of compassion, nor to be shown gratitude afterwards.

Anyway, I was never what you would call a "good person".

The one and only reason that pushes me to do it is this: to safeguard my pride as a doctor!

- Mister Junk! I'll borrow your microscope!

We recognize the alleged inventors of genius. They always have everything you need at their fingertips.

I take the arm of sleeping "Penguin", put it on the microscope stage and secure it there with a rope. I then tilt the lens over the wound and increase the magnification.

That's it, I see everything!

Every vein, every nerve, nothing escapes me.

- Bepo! Take the arm that came off!

- Tcha... Tcha tcha!

I also put this piece on the set, starting from the elbow, torn apart by the explosion.

Perfect, it's quite cold. The cellular system is still alive. It should be doable!

I grab a needle with thread and begin my joining operation.

With caution and circumspection.

I just need to tie together the two ends, that's it.

No error is allowed.

Remember what Daddy taught you.

Remember everything you've read.

First, the muscles and tendons. Yes, here it is ... No problem.

Then the nerves. If I screw up, he'll never be able to move his arm again. A millimeter across is already too much. I have to connect them all perfectly. With speed and precision. All the nerves, one by one. I feel like I'm losing track of time.

How many hours have passed since I started the operation? Two? Three? More?

My energy is being consumed at breakneck speed. At this rate, I'll be the first to collapse.

- Thank you, Bepo.

- Say ... they're not going to die, are they ?!

- Of course not. Who do you think I am? I'm Trafalgar Law, engineering surgeon!

As if to shake me up a bit, I make the chorus of Mister Junk mine. And I note indeed that sometimes it is enough to take oneself for what one wants to be to end up believing that one has become one, just to gain back a little strength.

Continuation of the operation.

I connect the two parts of the last nerve together.

Ok, here it is ... That should do ...

I concentrate all my strength in my shaky legs, and I move on with the blood vessels.

First the veins.

Then the arteries.

Finally, to finish, I sew the arm in its entirety.

End of the operation.

"Bam", here I am falling behind with all my weight.

- Law!

- Kid!

Aah, I'm so sleepy.

- Bepo, old man, don't bother looking at me so panicked. Watch the transfusion needle so that it doesn't come off ... I'm just taking a nap ... I'll be back right away ...

I am at the end of my strength and can only say these few words.

The relief that overwhelms me at the end of the operation is accompanied by the sandman.

Enveloping and rocking by this feeling of having accomplished something, I plunge into a soft and deep sleep.

***

As soon as I wake up, I inquire about the condition of the wounded.

The anesthesia apparently had its effect, as they are both still asleep.

I withdraw from each of them their transfusion in order to give them an injection of this powder diluted in water. This is a revolutionary nutritional supplement invented by my father. Their pulse is stable, they don't have a fever.

Alright looks like they both got over the tipping point.

- How are they doing, Law?

- Ossan, are you awake?

- Obviously. Impossible to close an eye knowing that I could wake up surrounded by two corpses.

- They are fine, no need to worry. My operation went perfectly. If we watch out for infections, they'll be fine.

- Ah good ... So much the better.

- So much the better? It's rare to hear you say such things. You're not going to get any profit from all of this though.

- Two kids who are saved is more than enough as a reward, isn't it?

With that, Wolf turns his face away. Without really knowing why, the awkward kindness that I perceive in him at this moment fills me with joy.

After four days, they both wake up.

They seem to remember perfectly what happened to them.

Because of his stomach operation, the boy in the cap has not yet recovered all his strength. But I know that by feeding him quietly and letting the time pass, everything will be fine.

The problem is more on the side of "Penguin".

Chapter 8

Of course, his life was saved, but if I failed in my operation, he will never be able to use his arm again and will take a big shock.

- I'll take your bandage off, "Penguin." Then you can try to move your arm and fingers.

- A... Alright...

"Penguin" looks terrified. The old man, Bepo and the other boy are also watching the situation with an air of concern.

- Go slowly. As if you wanted to give something extra to the touch.

- Ok...

"Penguin" watches his arm. This arm that he may have to carry around, during and useless, until the end of his days.

Plic.

"Penguin" wiggles his pinky finger. Then, in the order, his ring finger, his middle finger, his index finger and finally his thumb. To conclude, he raises his entire forearm.

I succeeded! The connection of the nerves is crowned with success.

Ha ha ha! Frankly, it's not a bad feeling.

I suddenly have the impression of seizing this "Joy of the doctor" that my parents looked for more than anything in the world, they who taught me everything.

- Uaaah! So much the better! So much the better! launches Bepo, throwing himself on the neck of "Penguin".

This guy is terribly good-natured. He even seems to have forgotten that the one he is hugging right now was persecuting him not long before.

We only hear their tearful voices.

They both cry, their faces brimming with tears and slime.

- Thank you, thank you! whines "Penguin" lowering his head.

- I was so scared ... I thought I was going to die ... But thanks to you ... I'm here ... alive!

Still unable to move properly, the boy in the cap is content to sob, his forehead wrinkles.

- No need to thank me, I did it like that.

Then I turn around so that none of those in the room can see how silly happiness makes me look.

About a week later, they are both almost recovered. During this period, Bepo and Wolf gave me significant help. The latter continued to complain, with a frowning expression and giving the air of being disturbed, but he never tried to put the wounded outside.

Now that their condition has stabilized, we decide to ask them about the circumstances of their accident. What happened? Why did two lonely children end up in such a place? There is no shortage of questions.

- Listen, kid, we're going to do the presentations again! I am Wolf! Mr. Wolf, inventor and genius! This is what you will call me, with the greatest respect!

- It doesn't matter what he says. It goes in one ear and comes out the other, it is just an old crouton with a passion for junk.

- Shut up, Law! And stop confusing the conversation!

- Ok, ok, if you want.

Incredible, he immediately turns red like a tomato.

The two boys talk to each other, then start talking about themselves.

The one with the cap is called Shachi.

The other, in the "Penguin" hat, is called Penguin.

Timidly, as if they still feared us, they disclaim their identity.

- Shachi and Penguin, delight. Could you start by telling us under what circumstances were you injured?

Wolf asks them the question in a tone a little softer than the accountant, in a quieter voice.

- Far in the forest, Shachi and I have built a cabin we've been living in for about two months, begins Penguin, who also speaks for Shachi, who is suffering from the stomach injury. The two of us do pretty well with the hunt, and as even in winter we find a lot of trees that bear fruit, we have never lacked enough to eat. But one fine day, while we were cooking a bird, a wild boar

attracted by the smell appeared out of nowhere ... It was so sudden that we didn't know what to do ... the boar took the opportunity to rush on us and pierce Shachi's side.

At this point looking exhausted, Penguin inhales at Shachi's side.

- Take your time, there's no rush, Wolf told him, pouring him more water.

- Immediately after, the boar turned to me. I could have run away, but I didn't want to leave Shachi to his fate. So, for lack of anything better, I headed for the cabin to pick up a bomb that I then tried to throw. Unfortunately, it exploded in my hand ...

- Hence the serious injury you made to yourself. But tell me, how did you get this bomb?

- We stole it in town. We said to ourselves that it could be useful for us to live in the forest, in case a danger arises.

- Yes I understand. It is not good to steal, but to ward off possible attacks of cattle, it is rather well seen.

Wolf pauses before swallowing a mouthful of tea.

Listening to the story of Penguin, a question comes to my mind. I imagine that Bepo and Wolf must have asked it themselves, too.

- And what about you parents?

I ask them the cash question, bluntly.

- Shachi's parents and mine died six months ago, Penguin blows.

At the time, I do not know what to say, but Penguin continues without further delay.

- That day, Shachi, his parents, as well as me and mine, we were having a barbecue on the most beautiful beach on all of Swallow Island. It was party time, everyone was enjoying themselves, and no one had noticed the strange aspect of the sea ... We had not realized that a huge wave was approaching at high speed. A wave so big that it could have swallowed up the whole island. Shachi and I were saved, because we were playing tree climbing further inland, but our respective family members ... were all washed away ...

At this point in the story, Penguin suddenly withdraws. He does his best to contain his tears.

Then, after a short pause, he resumes speaking, evoking in snatches what happened to them next. Their remaining families have agreed to entrust them both to Shachi's uncle and aunt. However, the uncle and aunt did not want children, but drudgery "tools". Penguin and Shachi

found themselves embroiled in weapons smuggling and jewelry store heists, against their will. To eat, they were only allowed water and a little bread.

I listen to the story of Penguin with a frown - it disgusts me. To learn that there are adults capable of plunging into the infernal life of children who have just lost their parents puts me beside myself.

- They wouldn't even think of us as humans. In their eyes, we were nothing more than escalves! That's why we ran away. But since we had nowhere to go or a way to make money, we built a cabin in the forest ... without being able to live honestly ... Fed up! I'm sick of not knowing what it is to live!

Penguin starts to cry. The face points to the ground, he tries to stifle his sobs.

Shachi who was lying on the bed gets up in turn in tears and comes to sit next to his friend.

- If you hadn't helped us, we would be dead. So thank you for your intervention! And...

Shachi turns to Bepo awkwardly and, as if he has just made a decision, opens his mouth and says:

- You, the polar bear ... You took care of us when we couldn't move. You fed us, you helped us in our reeducation ... So I could thank you again and again, it will never be enough!

- Don't worry about it, it's nothing ... It's okay to help a person when they're hurt, right?

- No of course not! Especially when these people are the ones who persecuted you a short time ago. We hit you with punches, kicks, and you manage to be nice to us? That's normal for you?!

Shachi turns to Bepo, nods his head, before being imitated by Penguin.

- Dear polar bear ... Uh, no, Bepo. Thanks for helping us. And I'm sorry, really sorry to have let out my anger on you! Sorry!

Silence invades the room. Bepo tells them not to worry. Penguin and Shachi stand still, tears streaming down their faces.

“I'm sick of not knowing what's the point of living?”

That's what Penguin shouted. I imagine Shachi is in the same state of mind too.

And shit. I don't know why, but it instantly made me uncomfortable.

I had the impression that he was the spokesperson for my feelings when my city burned down.

- Say, guys …

Chapter 9

I speak to Penguin and Shachi in the most natural way.

- You have nowhere to go. You're not going to go back to your uncle's either, are you?

- No, certainly not ... This is the last thing we would do …

- In this case, you just have to come under my orders, so you can live here.

- As I spoke, their faces began to glow.

- Did you forget that it is my home, here! plague the old man with a snarling tone.

- I do not know.

- By the way, Bepo is already part of my team.

- I'm learning it, here! Better late than never! Tcha tcha tcha!

Shachi and Penguin look at each other and, in the same vein, both nod their heads. Then they turn to us and sayin one voice, again bowing their heads deeply:

- Please let us put our bags here!

At the same time, Wolf sighs deeply, as if to complain that the number of kids living in his househas increased further.

- Listen to me carefully, kids! I have no choice, so I accept that you all sleep at my place for a while! But do not get me wrong! I have no intention of acting as a tutor! No way I will become a member of your family or even a friend! The only relationship that exists between us is "give and take"! You, you need a place to live! Me, I need arms for everyday tasks and to work on my inventions! It's give and take, get it?! As soon as the wounded are back on their feet, you will all go to work in the city! Not only will you help me around the house, but you will also be looking for a real job! Do we agree?!

Nobody objects to anything.

No face darkens.

Only Wolf blushed, as if he had just finished an embarrassing speech.

I think back to the meaning of the word "freedom" that Cora used to pronounce.

Bepo, Penguin, Shachi and I have all tasted an in effable loneliness, a nameless despair that we have overcome to keep us here.

I still don't know what that word "freedom" means. Only I know that Wolf's house is a place where I feel good.

Why, you will ask me?

Because the words of this old man whose principle is "give and take" are not words that crush those for whom they are intended. We can feel that he treats us as equals and that he respects us deeply.

If so, this place is the right one. Perhaps that by dint of living in the cores of these energumenes, I will end up finding this "freedom" which Cora harshed my ears.

I am convinced of it, but it is a conviction that is based on a few things.

Far away, at the end of our funny life together for five, I know that I will come across what I would like to find.

Aah ... The more I think about it the more I tell myself that in fact, this world is not that bad.

Watching these four fellows stir noisily, I feel a grin rising at the corners of my lips, discreetly.

Volume 2

Chapter 10

Penguin, you garbage! I had grilled this piece of meat myself!So what?! Quicker wins!Penguin and Shachi wait a minute! I saw that you had already swallowed three pieces, while I have only eaten two! I remind you that I got here before you did, so show me some respect!

Our dinners are always very active.Most of the time, Shachi, Penguin, and Bepo are arguing over some bad stuff. I tell myself that we would avoid a lot of confusion if, from the start, we shared the food fairly on everyone's plate instead of putting everything in a large dish, but I don't hesitate to put on a fourth piece of meat.

Shut it up a bit, moms! How many times will I have to tell you that here we eat in silence ?!

Old Wolf bangs his fist on the table and launches into his talks. As I know that, in his case, it usually lasts a while, I try to slip quietly into the next room, but ... someone suddenly grabs the back of my neck.

Law, you think I didn't see you trying to get away on your own, did you ?! I point out to you that it is because you, their leader, you do not take care of them well that these fellows lack of behavior!Oh yeah, and then what else ?! Certainly, I took them in my team, but I never made a commitment to become their mother!Name of a dog, but I'm dreaming! They are all more insolent than the others! Farewell, peaceful life, I will never find you …So what? Your current life is more animated than that of the time when you spent your days in your junk, it is not worse.So shut up! I didn't ask for your opinion!

Finally, I find myself alone to have to take Wolf's talks. Bepo and the others may observe the scene with a contrite air, I know that tomorrow they will start bickering again. Over time, I came to understand that if they ever genuinely regretted something, it never lasted more than a day.

Two months have passed at full speed since our life at five began.

Under a common roof, we share our meals, take baths together, invent games which we then play and spend a lot of time telling each other silly things. Never until now, in my whole life, have I made use of the time allotted to me in this way.

When I lived alongside Doflamingo and his men, all I had was despair. I was only moved by the dark desire to destroy this world before I disappeared myself, and nothing and no one could afford me these moments of pleasure that I have today. Doflamingo, Diamante, Lao G, Gladius, they had all taught me things, but it was for the sole purpose of making me their "toy".

Today, if I regard my time with Wolf, Bepo and the others, I at least know that they see me as a "human" and not as a thing. Our exchanges, our jokes, our laughter, all this makes me understand.

But the anger that I harbored towards Doflamingo did not disappear for all that. The desire for revenge remains present, black, dark, buried in my being; it appears from time to time on the surface of my face, without warning.

But now I have friends.

Friends who, thanks to all this stupidity that we do and say, help me to forget my anger, to forget my resentment.

And that's more than enough for me.

Regarding the work, we managed to share it with us in an equitable manner. At first we weren't used to it, we didn't know how to go about it and quarrels were numerous, but lately, myself included, we have finally managed to work hand in hand.

Wolf leaves the house at eight o'clock every morning and walks for about half an hour to his laboratory. For about a month or so, he seems to have things to do near the city, and it is not uncommon that night has already fallen by the time he returns.

I don't know what Wolf is up to, but are you sure he's okay? Between his inventions and his repeated outings in town, he does not risk getting tired? Bepo asks with great naivety.Don't worry, the junk's body is specially made. Remember, this morning again when he was talking about his work: "You will soon have the opportunity to see all our landscapes from the sky!"You're right, the main thing is that he's in good shape.

Wolf is the very embodiment of good health. As a precaution, he regularly undergoes a complete examination of his general condition, but the results are always perfectly normal. Better than that: his muscle strength and breathing capacity are even much better than that of a man in the full force of his age. Although he rarely evokes his youth, I imagine that at the time he had to train seriously.

While Wolf is away, we take care of the work in the fields, go fishing, do the housework and do the laundry. We do go backwards sometimes, but I have to admit that there are times when we also get a certain sense of pride in doing the work ourselves.

As for Penguin and Shachi, they say they want to become strong at all costs. However, the training they conduct in their own way is not very effective, it is often I who borrow weapons from Wolf in order to teach them the techniques of saber and cannon.

Okay, I admit it's not madness, but I'm not bored either. I must admit that these two are pretty good, and thanks to my advice that they listen carefully, they are progressing relatively quickly. I didn't expect the show of students putting into practice what I taught them to do so much to me. And when I see the bullet from their pistol crash into the middle of a distant target, I can't help but smile on my lips.

In the evening, we wait for Wolf to return for dinner, we talk about what we have been up to during the day, then we go to bed and sleep soundly. There are days when I find myself enjoying this well-regulated rhythm of life.

Although I know that in reality this kind of soft and comfortable existence never lasts very long.

Tomorrow we will all go to Pleasure Town.

One day, at dinner time, mister junk puts on a serious expression and says these words:

I hope you haven't forgotten your promise. You should not only help me work here, but also look for a job in town. You have been with me for two months already, you should think about respecting your commitment. I remind you that our relationship is only based on the "give and take", so if you want to pay a share of the rent and the food costs.

While speaking, Wolf scrutinizes us with his serious expression. At the moment, I am unable to respond favorably to his invitation.

Go to town.

Nothing to do, it's still the only thing that terrifies me today.

However, I am aware that I am completely cured of my illness. The white spots that strewn my face before have completely disappeared, no one in town will be surprised when they see me.

And yet.

Memories of the past have not disappeared. They remain present in me and continue to make me dirty. I remember those painful days when Corazon and I were walking in the snow. I remember those smiling doctors whose gaze changed, as if they had seen something dirty, and that nauseating atmosphere that set in as soon as I said the name of white lead disease.

And I'm scared.

With that, I'll go to bed. Tomorrow we will leave immediately after breakfast.

With these words, Wolf goes to his room. His words do not contain any hint of joke, on the contrary, he even expressed himself in a relatively cold tone. After the old man leaves, the atmosphere around the table becomes heavy. None of us seem to be happy with the announcement Wolf just made.

Say, Law …

Bepo calls out to me in a weak voice.

Do we really have to go to town?The old man is right. When he arrived here, we promised to go and work there, it was impossible to escape it.But ... I'm scared ... As soon as I think about how the people of town will react to seeing a talking bear, I start to tremble.Perhaps you would prefer to spend the rest of your life living here, at your ease and at the hook of the old man? That's not going to work. If we don't get out of here, we'll never be able to start our lives again.

And shit. I feel like I'm speaking for the sole purpose of convincing myself. I imagine Shachi and Penguin feeling exactly the same as Bepo. Or maybe not. They did not arrive here by chance, they had to flee. The anguish that threatens them now must be even stronger than ours.

I then ask them the following question:

Shachi, Penguin, do you know if Pleasure Town is a city that sucks?

Chapter 11

No, no idea ... When we lived at his place, my uncle used to tell us not to mix with the people of the city ... Penguin answers me without much conviction.

Then he adds:

When we left the house it was almost always to get contraband guns or to steal from shops, so we never really met normal inhabitants ... Look, Law, the more I think about it. and the less I want to go. Penguin and I did all four hundred shots there. I wouldn't be surprised if our faces were remembered ... And then, if we ever ran into my uncle or my aunt? Just thinking about it makes my heart pound …

Shachi struggles to finish his sentence and lowers his head.

Ok I see.

In fact, they are "adults" of whom we are afraid. They are far from everyone being as nice as Wolf.

On the outside of this world where we can play, have fun freely, the world of "children" are these "adults" whom we fear because they hate us, laugh at us, threaten us and mistreat us.

Despite everything, I say the following:

Don't worry, you'll be fine.

Suddenly, the eyes of my three companions turn to me.

After hesitating, I decided to tell them about white lead disease. I tell them about the persecutions I have suffered, my adventures I have experienced because of "adults" ... as well as the pain that was mine when I lost loved ones.

All three listen to me religiously, in the most complete silence.

Then, in his frail voice, Bepo lets out:

So, Law, I didn't know that such a thing happened to you …Well, it wasn't particularly worth talking about. Especially since I am now completely healed. What I want to tell you is that you don't have a choice either, you have to become strong. Indeed, I drool, I live. Tomorrow, in town, we do not know what awaits us, we may break up. But if you freak out at just that idea, then you'll never be able to move forward! You will spend the rest of your life worrying about the looks of others, living in fear, and I'm sure you don't want something like that.

To make Shachi and the others listen to reason, I speak these words with the greatest calm. So, little by little, the incredibly dark expression of my sidekicks just now regains clarity.

Hmm ... Alright! I will make efforts! I will go talk to the people of the city and try to find a place to work! exclaimed Bepo, squeezing the paw firmly.

I can't help but encourage him:

There you go!Hey hey, I feel a lot better now. Thanks, Law. There's no need to say, you're a really great guy! In your place, I would freak out so much that I would never dare to set foot in town again.

The only thing I can find to say to Shachi is a "Really?" without conviction. If you only knew, man, I'm like you too, I'm scared. My limbs are frozen with fear and I can feel the sweat trickling down my back. Just imagining what might happen in town tomorrow makes my stomach ache. I nevertheless think that in front of them, it is my duty to act as if all is well. Bepo, Penguin, Shachi, it's me who asked you to join my team. This implies responsibilities to be assumed as a leader.

I must look strong.

I must have presence.

If I, too, let myself down at a time like this, they will have no choice but to live the rest of their lives in fear.

And that, I don't want to.

I am proud, too.

And to protect them, I am ready to make some sacrifices!

Well, that's not all, but it's time to go to bed. If we don't wake up tomorrow morning, we can be sure that we will be entitled to the old man's remonstrance.Tcha tcha tcha!

Before I reassured, they all seem to have recovered.

We then return to our rooms to go to bed. The day is over, everything will be decided tomorrow.

"It will be fine, it will be fine." Deep down, I repeat these few words to myself, as if to convince myself that everything will be fine. Then I roll up in my blanket and close my eyes.

***

The next morning, the five of us meet at the table, around fried eggs prepared by Penguin.

Junk remains silent.

Tss, he could at least make the effort to speak to us. He knows very well that we dread this day, but no, he does not get one …

Deep inside me, a slight doubt begins to germinate. What if, in the end, Wolf was an "adult" like any other? What if his goal was to use us to make money?

No, I cannot believe that lies have been mixed with the benevolence he has shown us over the past few months. Although, I don't know. In the total inability to guess his thoughts, I find it difficult to hide my anxiety.

It's time, let's go.

In accordance with the order given by Wolf, we all climb aboard his giant buggy. An invention of his own and which can accommodate up to eight people. As I sit in the front seat, Bepo and the others sit in the back.

The buggy runs at full speed on the road towards the city. I hear the three of them talking behind, but something in their voices makes them seem wanting. I then glance at Wolf's face while driving, but it's hard for me to get any information out of his expression.

After about twenty minutes, we arrive at the entrance to the city. Nothing has changed since the last time, the first thing I see is still this sign with "Pleasure Town" written on it. Except that from now on, we are learning to enter, to discuss with people and to look for work.

Pew, I let out a big sigh.

I have to hold on.

I have a duty to protect my men, my comrades.

Let's go.

Although Wolf is not very talkative, he moves very quickly. With a heavy and uncertain step, we commit to following him.

Here it is, a very lively city.

I didn't realize it when I was last there, but the voices of the many food and beverage vendors are reaching us from all sides.

Here, the freshly caught fish! Buy my beautiful fish!The best meat is on my shelves! Thirty percent off if you buy it now!

Early in the morning, people are already dancing and singing in the main square, it feels like we landed in the middle of the festival. A brief circular glance makes me see stalls of tattoos, divination, shops of instruments and clothes. The animation is such that I no longer know where to head.

But what surprises me most is the attitude the locals take towards Wolf.

Hi, Wolf, it's been a while! I have just returned parts which could be useful to you for your inventions, thus come to buy some!Yes, I will be sure to drop by later.Hello, Mr. Wolf! Who are these young people who accompany you? Your grandchildren?What next? They are just parasites!Ah good, if you say so. They look cute, though. Don't you want to grab some apples? Today, I am offering them to you because you are with children.In this case, difficult to refuse. Thank you!

With every step, someone different speaks to Wolf. It seems that in this city our friend is known as the white wolf. And as we accompany him, many people are also interested in us. No one, among all the people we meet, looks at us with disgust or in an insulting manner.

Are you reassured?

Deprived of his cold air this morning, Wolf addresses us as usual, wearing a gentle and considerate smile.

You should know that twelve years ago, because of a bunch of damn pirates, this city almost disappeared. Following this incident, the inhabitants came up with a sort of motto: "A city where everyone can be happy. A city where friendliness reigns." That's why people here are not surprised to see a talking bland bear. They all make an effort to welcome each visitor with the utmost respect. This is the spirit of this place.

I then ask him:

Ossan ... Did you know things were going to turn out like this?Obviously. I am a genius inventor, I remind you I can see a little into the future.

Chapter 12

In that case, you might have done better to talk about it before you come, right? Pff, what's the point? I'm pretty sure that my explanations wouldn't have been enough to convince you, or even to get rid of your anxiety. The kindness of people, one has to feel it oneself to be convinced that it exists.

Wolf was right, hard to deny. He could have told us that the place was safe, but we would not have placed our trust in him. While in this way, being approached by a whole bunch of individuals in this bustling city, the fear and fears that plagued us seem to have already vanished.

Well, it's time to go say hello to the policeman stationed here. He is the only one who can give children permission to work.

After crossing a square and continuing straight on, we come across a small brick building. The police station, it seems.

Rad! You're here?!

In response to Wolf's call, a man comes out of the building. He is dressed in a red uniform and wears a saber at his waist. This is undoubtedly the policeman in question.

Um ... is that you, Wolf ?! What a surprise! It's rare that you come to see me at the station when you're passing through.Actually, I have a little favor to ask of you. I'd like you to allow these fellows to work in town. These are four kids that I am currently taking care of.Do you take care of them? You? How could such a thing happen?!Oh, don't look for a deep meaning in it, you know. I host them, and they put their work force at my disposal. It's a simple "give and take" relationship.Um, if you say so, I want to believe you. So sign here, since you are in a way their guardian. All they have to do is walk around town at their cruises and look for a place where we want them.

After Wolf signs, we also affix our respective names. All our names joined together on one sheet.

Looks like a real family.

Then, in a voice full of gravity, Rad addresses Wolf:

Say, Wolf.Mh, what?Don't you plan to come back to town soon? You know everyone will make you welcome, eh? The same for these little young people, they will be treated with kindness.Ah, no, especially not. I am fully satisfied with the life I have today. And then you know very well that here, they will not let me carry out my experiments and manufacture my inventions in a satisfactory manner. A peaceful existence, alone in the back of my mind, is best suited to the old crouton that I am.Ok, I got it, I won't say more. But if you ever change your mind, don't hesitate to come and talk to me about it.Hmm, thank you, very kind of you.

Wolf's tone reveals a rouche of melancholy, but I can't find the words to adequately describe this feeling.

Then each of us discusses with Wolf the tasks we would like to accomplish, then we decide to tour the places corresponding to our wishes.

For me, a medical practice.

For Bepo, a site where he can use his strength.

For Penguin, a restaurant to work as a waiter.

And for Shachi a hairdressing salon where he would take care of various tasks.

We show up everywhere accompanied by Wolf who explains to employers how honest boys we are how we can be count on and how we can be trusted.

Thanks to him, we are all hired in less time than it takes to tell. The proceedings are unfolding so well that one comes to wonder if, on the contrary, something is wrong.

I have dreamed of becoming a hairdresser for so long! As soon as I have made mine their techniques, I promise to take care of your hair!It's true that you're pretty good with both hands, Shachi, this job should be fine for you. Me too, I always wanted to work as a waiter, but I am sure not to be up to the customers. Provided that the chef does not scare me too much …So, a construction site ... Do you think they'll let me use the jackhammer or the backhoe ?! I always thought it looked cool to work with this kind of gear …

All three are in heaven, as if the fear that held their stomachs in the morning had never existed.

Ayaya, what a story. Although, I would be lying if I said that I was not at all excited.

Although it was specified that I would initially only be given small consultations, honestly, being able to work in a medical practice in direct contact with medicine fills me with joy.

I remember the faces of my parents in the past, when they were treating the sick.

And even though water has flowed under the bridge since that time, when I think that I will be able to work in the same environment as them, I feel like a powerful heat invading my whole body.

Hmm, the more I think about it, the more I'm afraid of getting yelled at at the first stupidity, Bepo whispers in his corner.Don't worry, Bepo, I'll be there to heal you when you "bleed" on top of you.Oh yeah, so you got the idea that I really hurt myself seriously! Tcha tchaaa!

Ha ha ha, we're having fun. I never imagined that I could one day laugh in a location where I would have to work with adults from now on. I'm going to have to thank old Wolf and just that pisses me off. Speaking of Wolf, I realize that he who looked jovial a moment before now has black eyes.

I have to go through one last place. Come.

With these words, Wolf sets off in the opposite direction to that of the entrance to the city.

What is it, mister junk? Screws, nuts, spool, we've already bought everything you need for your inventions. We can go home now, right?The same for everyday objects and food, we have everything you need.

Penguin and Shachi speak to him, but Wolf continues to walk straight ahead without bothering to answer them. Without really understanding what is happening to us, we make our way after him.

Say, this direction, the …Yes I know...

Behind me I hear the thin voices of Penguin and Shachi. These two are clearly not quiet, they keep getting agitated. After a few moments, Wolf stops.

We find ourselves in front of an incredibly large house. Would a friend of Wolf live here?

Here ... why?

I glance at the side and I see Penguin, pale as a dead man.

Why? I never wanted to see this place again, me …

Shachi's voice is trembling as well.

This is it, I understand. Considering their reaction, I believe they lived for a while.

What does that mean, Wolf ?! What did you bring us here for? Shachi shouts as if he is going to cry at any moment.Shachi, Penguin, listen to me. You may have been forced into it, you remain objectively complicit in several misdeeds. If we do nothing, someone in town will sooner or later find out, and the trust that has been placed in you until then will suddenly collapse. That is why it is necessary to set the record straight once and for all.B ... But! I ... I don't feel at all capable of going to explain myself to my uncle and my aunt, me ... Since we arrived here, my legs are shaky …

Penguin clenched his teeth, trying to hold back tears at all costs.

That's when...

Everything will be fine.

As if about to hug them, Wolf puts his hands on Penguin and Shachi's shoulders.

All you have to do is watch. The rest is my job. A job for "adult".

After ordering them to trust him, Wolf walks through the gate of the house and knocks on the door. Then appears a woman dressed in a maid's costume.

H ... Hello, to whom do I have the honor?My name is Wolf, inventor and genius. I'm sorry to disembark without warning, but I would like to speak with the owner of the premises.Ah but ... it is necessary to make an appointment first …Just tell him I'm happy with Shachi and Penguin! That's all!Yes... of course.

Once the maid has left, a man engulfed in a gold-colored suit, his body covered with probably very expensive jewelry, makes his appearance.

Ooh, but they really are Penguin and Shachi, what a surprise! Is it you, the old man, who made this trip to bring them back to me?

I hear this voice for the first time, yet I know it belongs to a genre that I know well. The kind of voice that "grown-ups" use when they mistake people for, or despise them. I instantly understand that this man is the one who once used Penguin and Shachi as vulgar instruments. Wolf continues:

I prefer to check: you are Shachi's uncle, aren't you?Yes, I am their legal guardian. If you only knew how dumb I found myself when I realized their disappearance, oh my. Thanks for taking the trouble to bring them back to me.

By saying these words, the man tries to approach Shachi and Penguin, but Wolf interrupts his advance by interposing himself between them.

Mmh? What is it? It's been a long time since I saw my family, that's all. They must have had a lot of spawn, I just want to bring them in so I can reassure them.

Chapter 13

There is no way they will return to your side.Huh? What are you talking about, papi? Did you lose your mind, or what? Oh no ... I think I know! You didn't make the trip here to leave empty-handed! How much do you want me to pay you? Five hundred thousand berries? A million? You come to give me back my precious tools, it is normal that I reward you!Your ... tools? Wolf replies, raising his eyebrows.

He gives the man a hostile look like I have never seen.

Unfortunately for you, I did not bring them to your house with the idea of returning them to you.What?You and your wife made Penguin and Shachi commit crimes ranging from smuggling weapons to breaking into jewelry stores. Is this the strict truth?Tss! You little shits! You've spoken, eh ?! What a bunch of cretins you are ... I had not yet trained you properly, I see!

Drunk with anger, the man raises his fist as he walks towards Penguin and Shachi.

Is it fear that paralyzes them like this? Still, their bodies are completely stiffened and they remain planted there, in the total inability to avoid the blow that is dealt to them.

A punch stops dead by Wolf.

Oh, let go of me, old man! But ... This ... Where does this strength come from? Stop, you're going to crush my hand!I imagine that's how you hit them on multiple occasions?Yeah, so what ?! What is wrong with that? I offered them a place to live after their parents died! I also knew how to brilliantly use these two horns, these scraps of society! And when they screw up, they eat each other a loaf of bread, normal! This is the only way to make good tools! These two little guys should thank me for having them shaped!

Chills run through my body without stopping. Except that unlike earlier, they are no longer due to fear. Anger rises from deep within my bowels, the anger to see Shachi and Penguin, my friends, taunt like this.

Don't make fun of them!

I quickly realize that it's me who just screamed. I couldn't control my emotions, this mixture of grief and sadness.

These boys are my precious teammates! And I don't allow a scum like you to call them "tools"!Law...

I hear Shachi's tearful voice.

So you don't understand ... what they may have felt? Their parents die ... they no longer have any adults to rely on ... and now they are forced to commit crimes ... Can you imagine how painful it must have been for them?!I find that you open it a little too much for a simple kid! So

listen to me well! These two, I agreed to collect them! I offered them a place to sleep and something to eat! Finally, "eat" is a big word for what I gave them. It looked more like rat food ... but it was more than enough for them!A sort of...

Unable to suppress my anger any longer, I rush towards him with the firm intention of hitting him. However, at the same time, faster than me …

Enough, shut up.

Wolf's fist thrusts violently into the man's stomach.

U... Ugh...

Then the man collapses and loses consciousness.

Shachi! Penguin! Wolf yells at the top of his chest. You are not tools! And even less not guys that nobody wants! In my eyes, what has this man just said, there is really nothing to offend you!

Throughout his speech, Bepo and I remain standing. Shachi and Penguin, meanwhile, kneel down and cry bitter tears. They would have had a mountain of things to say, but Wolf did it for them.

Wolf! What happened?

Rad appears, the policeman from earlier, probably alert by the noise, who comes running, out of breath.

Here, Rad, you hit the nail on the head. This man and his wife, who must be somewhere in the house, force children to smuggle weapons and break into shops in town. I would like you to search the building right away.I have heard about this family for a long time, but ... I cannot organize a search until I have hard evidence …Hmmm! Do you want proof? Here, there it is! I stole these documents from the organization with which this man is on the title of the products, their quantity, and even the name of this guy.But ... how could you …It's been a month since I gathered information from the inhabitants to finally find the place where they were hiding. It was only yesterday, when I was picking up this piece of paper, that I had to use my fists.Mister junk, don't tell me that ... is that what you've been doing in town for a month?Yes. To be honest, I didn't think it would take me that long. Not to mention this little fight against five buggers at the same time, I had for my trouble.

So that's why Wolf has been going to town every day lately … And the story of the five-on-one fight ... He's awfully tough, in fact, our old friend.

Great, now I have the evidence to conduct a search. Wait here for me, I am coming back with men.

Shortly after, a crowd of policemen formed and entered the house.

As Wolf promised, inside they find a wealth of evidence attesting to the crimes of the uncle and aunt. Not only about the misdeeds Shachi and Penguin had spoken about, but also about the sale of narcotics and an upcoming project to kidnap children and sell them off the island.

The officers then arrest the two criminals and then take them to the station. Rad takes off his hat and tilts his head towards Wolf:

You will have given yourself a lot of trouble, thank you.I didn't expect kids to work so seriously. We will say that it was a bonus to congratulate them.You'll never change, Wolf. You always choose to take care of us and it is you who drool the most.Be careful of what concerns you, Rad. This lifestyle suits me perfectly.

Hearing these words, Rad laughs.

Wolf pouted a little, pursing his lips and looked away so no one could see his embarrassment.

Wolf! Penguin and Shachi cried, running up to him.Oh, the kids ... Sorry for that spectacle, it was not pretty to see. But at least now that their crimes have been brought to light, you can be sure no one will come up and blame you for anything. You will be able to continue working with peace of mind.

Wolf crouched down in front of them both, resting his right hand on Shachi's head and his left hand on Penguin's. Then he stroked it to them with such vigor that they were quite messed up.

No one will ever scare you again.

As soon as Wolf has finished speaking, Shachi and Penguin come to snuggle up to his chest and cry hot tears there. Despite the sobs and the snot flowing from their noses, Wolf hugs them tightly against him, a smile on his lips.

Law, would that mean that from the start, Wolf has been struggling for us?Who knows ... I retort sharply.

The answer is too obvious to dare ask the question.

An impressive crowd then rushes to accompany us to the exit of the city that we are leaving. As this morning, the buggy transports us by making resound its powerful engine noise. A noise which, at the moment, seems strangely pleasant to us.

Pfiou, what a day. It happened, things, almost too much my age. But I hope you kids know that things don't start until tomorrow! It won't be easy to work outside while still helping out at home! At the slightest blunder on your part, it will be my fist in the face.

One by one, we all tell him that we agree. But we are also at the end of the roll, on the knees. Even more than physical fatigue, it is our nerves and our morale that are undermined.

With all the "adults" that we have met and with whom we have spoken today, nothing could be more normal. But we have to admit that it was not that bad.

Say, Wolf…Hm? What is it, Bepo?

The bear had spoken unconsciously.

The policeman earlier asked you the question, but you really don't intend to move to town? Not only did everyone seem to like you a lot, it would also be a lot more convenient for all courses.You heard what I said back to him, right? I am fully satisfied with the life I lead now. First, what would you do if an explosion due to my experiences happened in the middle of the city, eh? Then ... no, that's it. One thing is certain, it is better for everyone that I live outside.

We do not interfere more, because his last words have a scent of loneliness that pushes us to opt for restraint. As I have my past, and as Bepo has his, Wolf also certainly has a story of his own. It would be a mistake on our part to try to find out more about what only concerns him.

B... But!

From his back seat, Penguin exclaims:

Chapter 14

I'm so glad you got us out of there! It's true that at first, I was a little scared, but ... finally, thanks to you, Wolf, I understood that I could trust "adults" again!Yes, me too, Shachi continues. Ever since we've all been living together, I pretended to have forgotten, even though I still feared, somewhere deep inside me, that my uncle and my aunt would one day come and pick me up to take me with them. But now, thanks to everything you've done for us, Wolf, I know I'm safe! Thank you!

At these words, Wolf blushes, mumbles something under his breath and adds, as if to conclude:

I told you, it's nothing more than "give and take!"

***

From then on, our days become very busy.

In the morning, we go to town with the electric bikes that Wolf made us (he offered to give them the name of "Super comet", but we all unanimously refused), then, after having done our respective work, we go home. We do the grub, the laundry, depending on the day we work in the fields or we help Wolf with his inventions. Although these different activities are already an intensive program, we also make sure to find time to study or even to train.

As Shachi and Penguin get better at wielding saber and pistol, Bepo not only continues to learn navigation, but has also started learning kenpo. I do not know if the fact that he is a mink has anything to do with it, but he grasps the techniques very quickly and progresses quickly. The other day, as I was helping him practice the rotary kick, he punched so hard he could have sent me up in the air if I hadn't been careful. I seriously freaked out.

Despite our busy days, the five of us try to eat breakfast and dinner together. I find it hard to explain why, but it's as if being together to eat keeps us connected despite our diverse and varied activities.

The work we do outside is much more fun than I expected. In the medical office where I am employed and where only a doctor and his nurse work, I have a lot to learn. The doctor, in particular, teaches me a lot of things. He tells me about the patients he has treated so far, the most difficult cases of illness he has had to deal with, the time he had an anemic attack and lost consciousness in full operation, the conditions under which they practice medicine in other countries, as well as the art of operating well ... All of his stories are incredibly stimulating.

Initially, I was not very comfortable in contact with patients, but the doctor seemed to appreciate my knowledge and my technique, because after some time he gave me fairly simple operations to lead.

Operating is just fun.

By that, I don't mean that I particularly like to slaughter people, no, it's just that the fact of putting sick, suffering people back in good health gives me immense pleasure.

Believe me, Law, you will become an excellent doctor, the doctor assures me one day, laughing.

An excellent doctor?

What is it exactly?

Is it someone operating correctly?

Or someone who has knowledge of pharmacology?

Unless it is a professional capable of making a very good living?

I imagine that I will have to move slowly, to grow groped to hope to be able to find the answer in the future.

One evening, when we are all gathered inside, Penguin takes the opportunity to tell us a story he has heard about in town.

I listened today and heard a client talk about the "Swallow Island Treasure Legend".

Bepo immediately bites the hook and exclaims, all excited:

What, a treasure? Here on this island ?!Yeah. Sixty years ago, all members of a famous pirate crew that set foot on Swallow lost their lives due to a disease contracted during their navigation. It is their captain who, before breathing his last, hid his treasure somewhere on the island.Um, indeed, that would make a nice story if it were true. But a treasure that no one has found in sixty years, well I tend not to believe it too much.Ooh, Law, what a killjoy you are! There is this treasure, I'm sure! Even though it will allow us to lead a life of the rich, a life of splendor!Calm down, Bepo, this story blinds you a little too much. I remind you that this is just gossip, be careful not to believe it too much.Hey, speaking of rumor, I got wind of an interesting story, too, Shachi reveals to us. It seems that there exists on this island "a swallow which flies at the bottom of the sea."Where do you get these salads from? It happens at the bottom of the sea, but your swallow flies and does not swim ?! I retorted immediately.This story is quite recent. In recent years, offshore, fishermen have seen several times a giant swallow in the water. And every time it shows up, a powerful song is inevitably heard all over the island.

An underwater swallow and a powerful song...

What is it, Law? You seem very serious, worries Bepo, quoting me.No, it's just that I maybe heard that song before.What?! You're kidding?It happened on a day when I wasn't working, while I was home alone. It must have been past noon ... I was spinning outside with my sword,

and suddenly, I heard this cry, a very high-pitched "kiiiiiin". He took about thirty seconds before calming down. I remember it, because it surprised me.Unbelievable! I knew it existed, this "swallow from the bottom of the sea"! Penguin raves.Difficult to say ... What I heard didn't really sound like a bird's cry …This is certainly because it is a rare species, its call is different from that of other swallows!He is right, it can only be that! And if this "Swallow Island Swallow" story turns out to be correct, then there is a good chance that the "Swallow Island Treasure Legend" story is too!

Shachi suddenly seems very excited too. The discussion continues on how the pirate treasure might be hidden, until we fall asleep. I don't know if it's because my taste for adventure was also tickled by their stories, but, something untypical for me, I let myself go in the excitement and participate with pleasure in the continuation of the conversation.

Notice, it doesn't matter whether a rumor is founded or not if it is enough to stimulate our imaginations. I don't see anything wrong with it.

***

-Hey, aren't that Bepo and the others?

After having finished the job, I go by bicycle towards the exit of the city where I bump into my three friends. Shachi waves his hand towards me in greeting:

Oh, Law!What are you guys doing here?Nothing special. Since we all finished work at the same time, we thought we were going to wait for you to show up too.Ok. Since we're all here, how about a quick run home? The last to arrive will be responsible for cleaning the toilets and preparing breakfast for a week.Alright!

While pedaling fully on my bike, I catch the wind in my face and I'm a little cold. However, the competition excites me, warms me up, and I quickly manage to forget this little inconvenience.

This journey, which normally takes us around an hour, can be completed in a maximum of half an hour.

Yes, I am first!

Unconsciously, I take the pose of the winner.

In the distance, behind me, Shachi, Penguin and Bepo are in single file. They arrive in the same order, so Bepo lost.

Ha ha ha, that proves that it is not enough to have strength in the legs to go fast, Bepo. No matter how much water flows under the bridge, you're still just as clumsy on a bike. You stagger so much when you pedal that it's even scarier to watch you move forward.Yes ... I don't know, I

can't do it ... I might be better off leaving you, going on a trip so that I can be alone with myself …Stop brooding over the smallest thing! This tendency to depress as soon as the opportunity presents itself, will it never pass to you either ?!

We try to cheer up Bepo who seems to be at the bottom of the hole, then we enter the house.

Considering what time it is, Wolf should be back. So much the better, because we would like to have dinner as quickly as possible.

Oi! Mr. Junk! We are here!

I call him, without answer.

He hasn't come home yet?

Strange. Mr. Junk gives the impression of being a badly licked bear, on the other hand it hardly ever happens to him not to respect a schedule which he has fixed himself.

Chapter 15

Perhaps he is immersed in one of his inventions?

What do we do? Shall we start by preparing the meal?Yes, let's do like that. Especially since we were able to buy some good meat today ... Hey, what's that, Law?Mh?

I turn in the direction Penguin is pointing at me. On the other side of the window, a dense black smoke rises from our field. There we find a device similar to an airplane that spits flames and gives off smoke, as well as …

Yes, that form is him, Wolf covered in blood.

Ossan!

I rushed to him and immediately made an inventory of his condition. He is bleeding horribly and is unconscious. His breathing is weak, as is his pulse.

He is clearly in danger.

Losing about a third of their blood is enough for a human to be in danger of death. As far as a brief naked eye examination can go, this is what Wolf seems to have lost.

It is clear that we do not have a single second to waste.

I'll take care of transporting the old man! Bepo, heat some water! Penguin, take care of the pool table so I can lay him down! Shachi, prepare my equipment for the operation!Already heading!Your gear is ready, Law! I sterilized everything!

When I walk into the house with Wolf on my shoulders, the operating table is already installed in the living room. I lay him there and retrieve my gear, which Shachi hands me.

In a worried voice, Bepo asks me:

The old man's injuries, how serious are they?

I would like to tell him that it is not much, but I choose to remain silent.

Wolf is in a terrible state.

He must have been on board the aircraft which crashed in the field.

His head is little affected, but he suffers from numerous hemorrhages, and his internal organs are seriously damaged. Some erupted at the time of the fall and in others we can see traces of the debris that has planted there.

Even as I try to measure my words, his injuries are still severe enough that his chances of survival are low.

Law, is that you?Avoid speaking for the moment. Go to sleep quietly.What ... am I hurt? Haa ... Haa ... I was trying out an electric glider that I designed for you ... for you to have fun ... Then I got a gust of wind before I went overwrite ... Name of a dog, I do not deserve the name of "genie" …Silence, bug! I'll listen to you tell me your story later!Law, what are we doing ?! I hurry to get a doctor in town?No, Penguin, don't bother. The time to make the round trip, it takes almost two hours. We don't have enough time for that.In this case, what do you want?I'll take care of it.Law…I will take care of the operation, I decare with as much conviction as possible.

I carefully check his injuries one by one.

And shit! It spreads everywhere, impossible to know exactly which organs are affected.

Shachi! Penguin! I have to give him a transfusion! I'm gonna need your blood!Ok!Fine!

I immediately prepare the material and promptly send the blood of my two friends into Wolf's body. But it is nothing more than a palliative, a simple emergency measure. Until I suture the wounds, hemorrhagic shock can make the old man snap at any moment.

Only here, I am not yet able to say precisely what is affected and where exactly the wound is.

And even if I managed to list all the wounds, because of my slowness I would never be in time to complete the operation.

Dum-Dum. His heart is beating very hard. His chest squeezes him, he can hardly breathe.

I'm so scared that I shudder with all my limbs. When I came to the aid of Penguin and Shachi, the operation was certainly to save their lives, but it was not that complicated.

However, today is a different story. It is necessary to have a high analytical capacity and a high level technique. Am I capable of it?

I'm afraid.

This is the first time that I find myself in such a situation. When I think that on my actions will depend the life, or the death, of a man, I feel dizzy and I am about to stagger.

What should I do?

Reflect. Think about it, damn it.

My breathing is jerky.

I am sweating more and more.

I can no longer collect my ideas.

No, I don't have the right. If I don't pull myself together, Wolf will stay there …

At that moment, I feel something tighten my left hand.

Turning around, I see that it is Penguin and Shachi who, restraining themselves from crying, have put their two hands on mine.

Sorry, Law ... Sorry for not being of any use to you ... The only thing we can do is entrust you with the old man's life ... But you, Law, you, you can do it! You can save him just like you saved us, Penguin and me! I know what we say is not worth much, but ... we're sorry! Please, we're counting on you! Save the old man's life!

Hearing Shachi Speak these words, I feel all haste, quite literally nervousness fly away. Their feverishness is transmitted to my left hand. A fervor that symbolizes nothing other than their deep desire to see Wolf come out of it.

Yes that's it. From the start, I shouldn't have hesitated.

Anyway, I have only one choice. It doesn't make sense to try to imagine what would happen if I ever failed.

That's it, I stop shaking.

Everything will be alright. Walk away ... Trust me and watch.

As I feel the touch of their hands leaving me, I take a deep breath.

„Room"

I am deploying my powers. A dome-shaped membrane appears and envelops the whole room.

Wha... What is this?!Sounds like the thing that happened the first time we met Law …Yes, is it the same as the day he came to my rescue?

Penguin, Shachi and Bepo all three utter a cry of surprise. But the explanations will come later.

Law, this power, you …Shut up, Mr junk! I swear ... to get you out of here!

After putting Wolf to sleep with an anesthetic, I focus my mind in thr "Room".

„Scan"!

That's it, I see. I can know which organs are affected, and or exactly, as if I have them, right in front of my eyes.

The intestines are torn.

The stomach is piercing.

A piece of metal punctured the liver.

Everything ... I see everything!

„Tact"!

As I shout that word, the five scalpels on the side of the operating table begin to hover in the air. Without forgetting the one I am holding in my right hand.

Let's go!

Equipped with my six scalpels, I embark on the operation of Wolf. All the tools move exactly as I hear them. The thread and the needles necessary for the suture, as well as for the irons and the retractor. In this partitioned space called "Room", I can handle everything, move everything as I wish.

I should get out of it!

Chapter 16

While cutting the liver with a scalpel, I suture the wound in the stomach, stop the bleeding from an artery in the leg, remove a rib that has pierced a lung, wipe the blood that has flowed kidney, check that the transfusion is going well and put the other kidney in bad shape in its place.

There you go... we are well! The bleeding has all stopped and he is breathing normally. He's on the right track, he's on the right track!

Except that the very moment I said to myself …

Ouch!

A powerful headache assails me.

It is no ordinary pain. It hurts so much ... Looks like someone is hitting me with an anvil right in the head. No matter how much I practice, I imagine that is the price to pay for having deployed all my powers at once!

It sucks severe.

I feel like I'm going to pass out. I feel that my legs are failing me!

Scalpel in hand, I fall on my knees to the ground.

Law!Everything is fine, don't ... worry …

Yes everything is fine.

They have no reason to worry. I will rid them of all possible sources of concern. My "Room" and "Tact" powers don't wear off. Wolf always talks about "give and take". Nothing is given without return, that seems to be his principle. But today, all of this has nothing to do with it.

I just listen to my conscience, stupidly obey the impulse that has formed in my chest.

In front of me, I have a man on the verge of death, an old man who took me under his wing and took care of me. So all I can do now is try to cure him as best I can. I must remain standing, as a doctor!

And expect nothing in return. The only wish not to let Wolf die is enough to keep me going.

Survive, I beg you.

Despite the dizziness, I still find the strength to pray. I don't know if God exists, but if he does, I would like him only today to be on my side, to be my partner. I wish it with all my heart. I've seen enough people die that I cared about, I don't want that to happen anymore!

Above all, do not fall.

Don't falter.

Hold on for a little longer.

Don't die... Mr. Junk!

I'm almost done with the stitches. I only have her stomach left to sew up. With my hand completely drained of its strength, I grabbed a needle through which I passed a thread and sewn up this belly which I opened with the blows of a scalpel. The blood flowing through the limbs and chest also completely stopped.

Operation completed.

Huh... huh...

Thumbtack, my right knee is letting go, I'm going to fall backwards. Fortunately, my comrades are there to hold me back.

Law!Everything's fine. It's over, I just waver a little.Say, he's gonna be okay, huh ?!I do not know. The operation went smoothly, but he had already lost a lot of blood. Everything now relies on its vital force.

We then take four chairs and we sit next to the old man. It is out of the question to fall asleep. His condition can suddenly change for good or bad, I don't know. Without warning, I take a look at the side. I see Bepo, Shachi and Penguin who do everything to show nothing of their great fatigue and scrutinize Wolf's face relentlessly. None of them complains or laments.

They assure, my little young people. They are good crew members.

Three hours, four hours, five hours pass ... Only time passes.

Despite the late hour we normally sleep already, no one seems to be sleepy.

Don't you better get some rest, Law? We take care of monitoring him, and we wake you up at the slightest problem, Bepo assures me.Are you kidding me? As if the chief could snooze quietly while his men did all the work for him. No way.

No one said a word anymore. However, strangely, I have a firm belief that we all think about the same thing as much as we are.

„Survive."„Survive."„Survive."

Ten hours have now passed since I started the operation. The sun is shining through the window and the birds singing can be heard.

It is morning.

The light filtering through the cracks in the curtain spreads over Wolf's face. And as if to accompany this renewal …

Mmh... It is morning...

The old man wakes up.

He is alive?He speaks?He is saved? Shachi and the others mutter in a balanced voice.Wooooooh!!!

Our respective cries are superimposed on each other. Even I, to my surprise, cheer him with all my might.

Awesome! Well done, Law! The old man has risen! Penguin yells with a broad smile.

Still he would have had to be dead to be able to come back to life, but hey.

Well, that's it ... Me, who thought I was waking up in paradise, I find myself facing a bunch of kids who live in tumb ... That must mean that I'm alive.Um, you're doing a damn badass. I was planning on getting into the funeral preparations, but actually no.Law ... You saved my life.All the credit does not come back to me. With Bepo, Shachi and Penguin, we all worked hand in hand. If even one of them was missing, I wouldn't have been able to complete the operation.If you say so...

Wolf immediately fell asleep after exchanging a few words. What could be more normal with all the strength he burned in battle? As a precaution, however, I take his pulse and check the stitches, nothing is wrong.

I saved a life.

An intense feeling of satisfaction never before felt permeates every nook and cranny of my body.

***

Immediately after Wolf wakes up, Penguin heads into town to find the doctor. The latter uses the tools he brought with him to examine the old man.

I am not seeing any internal bleeding and his pulse is normal. For the rest, it will just be necessary to watch for possible complications. Law, did you treat him yourself?Yes.You conducted a perfect operation. I knew it from the start, but you're proving to me here that you have a talent for genius.Thanks, that's nice...

It's too much for me, I don't know where to put myself. It must be said that in my life, I never used to be congratulated. According to the doctor, it will take about two months for Wolf to fully recover.

I would have liked to have stayed at home throughout this period in order to monitor its progress, but unfortunately this is not possible.

Although my boss has allowed me to be away for as long as necessary, I still decide to return to help in the office after a week of observation of the patient.

However, we cannot all be absent at the same time, it would be too risky. So we decide to adjust our respective schedules so that there is always someone by Wolf's bedside.

It's okay, I'm healed! You can go to work without worrying about my pear!

As expected, Wolf immediately finds fault with the situation, but we ignore his complaints. If no one was present with him in case any post-shock symptoms appeared, there really wouldn't be much to laugh about. Thus, while watching over Wolf, we continue as best we can to carry out all the daily tasks.

Chapter 17

Here then, but who is it ?! The youngster from Wolf!Ah, the tattoo artist.

One day when I was walking around town, some time after the old man's operation, I was approached by the boss of the tattoo shop:

Heard that Wolf was seriously injured? Is he better now?Yes, he doesn't have any problems anymore. He still cannot stand up on his own, but he eats hungry every day.Okay, so much the better. The doctor at the medical office told me that you performed the operation yourself, is that right? Congratulations!Thanks, but that's not much. As we didn't have time to transport him here, I took responsibility.Ha ha! Little Mister is modest!

As we speak, an idea crosses my mind.

Say, Mister tattoo artistWhat is it?Do you think you would have time to tattoo me?Yes, without worry. But shouldn't you ask Wolf for permission first?Um ... No, that will be fine.

To tell the truth, it's been a while since I have a certain admiration for tattoos. I have always found the act of engraving something on your body cool, even classy.

Heard! You can count on me to draw you a super elegant!

With that, the man guides me to his shop, the interior of which is entirely decorated in black and white, then sits me down on an armchair that looks very expensive.

What do you want me to draw for you? It's up to you to choose the pattern and the part of the body where you want to get a tattoo.

Flowers of bright colors, a saber or a pistol that imposes, I don't miss ideas. However, I ultimately do not opt for any of them.

Instead, I tell him point blank:

I would like you to draw the letters of the word "DEATH" on my fingers.„DEATH"?! Are you sure of your choice? I know you're a doctor, so have the word "DEATH" engraved on your body …On the contrary. It is because I am a doctor that this word takes on its full meaning.Mmh? Well, I don't really see where you're going, but after all, you're the boss.

Looking happy, the tattoo artist sticks his needles in my fingers to inject ink. It tingles a bit, but the pain remains quite bearable.

D-E-A-T-H.

One letter for each finger.

And here is the work! So what do you say?I like it, thank you.You're welcome, it was a pleasure. Say hello to Wolf for me!

Once out of the store, I stare at my hands.

"DEATH", a word which means "death".

I didn't choose it for a particularly deep reason. But as a doctor, I always need to feel death by my side.

For people to live …

So that the people I care about most live …

For all of these reasons, I wanted to constantly remember that I am closest to the death of a whole bunch of people.

Aah, the more I look at it and the more I love it, this tattoo.

As soon as I get home, I show off Penguin and the others with my tattoo.

Awesome!Brilliant!Terrible!

The reviews are laudatory.

Doesn't it hurt when it stings you? Shachi asks me.Yes, a dog's pain. The kind of pain you couldn't take.

I add a little more, but too bad, I do not want to take the lead.

A little later, I hesitate to tell Wolf about my tattoo while bringing him his meal, but for fear of being reprimanded, I finally decide to shut up.

Take me a flight of green wood by the old almost completely healed, no thank you!

***

In the evening, unable to sleep, I read quietly on the sofa in the living room. Wolf chooses precisely this moment to make his appearance.

Hi, Mister Junk, can you stand up? It's only been a short month since you had the operation.Pooh, you underestimate me, kid. My body is concrete. I fortified it a lot when I was young, that's why I only need a month.If you say so ... so much the better!

I understand that I really succeeded in saving the old man's life, and I breathe a deep sigh of relief.

Speaking of which, Law, I would like to talk to you about something.Me ... Talk to me ?!

I have a very bad feeling.

What is it, Mister junk? Did you notice that I got a tattoo?A tattoo? Ah, you mean that thing on your fingers. Okay, to tell the truth, I don't care. To get a tattoo or not, it's everyone's freedom. I don't have a say in it.Ah ... oh good ?!Yes, but come and sit here instead.

Wolf gently grabs a chair and hands it to me.

I sit there and find myself facing him, the table between us.

Law, I'm not going to go all the way. Are the powers that you used the other day to operate on me or not those of the fruit of the scalpel?What ... Huh ?! How come you know about it?

Until now, I have never discussed the existence of this fruit with him. And when I train, I always double-check that there is no one around me.

That's what I'm saying, you tend to underestimate old people too much. Know that in my youth, kid, I traveled by boat all over the world. So info, I heard a lot. I would have had to cover my ears if I had wanted to hear nothing! At one time I was even very interested in devil fruits, and read a lot about it.Oh yeah, I'm hallucinating …

I suspected that this old man was not just anyone, but to sail the oceans all over the world, that is...

Do you know the real power of the fruit of the scalpel?It's real power?

What does he mean by that? All I know is that by swallowing it one becomes capable of "performing miraculous operations and curing even unknown diseases."

From the look on your face, I take it you didn't know.But ... What are you talking about at the end?The fruit of the scalpel is also called the "fruit of the ultimate devil," a name it does not derive from the powers associated with operations and healing. No, because the fruit of the scalpel allows the holder to offer eternal life, to act as a true "elixir of youth."An "elixir of youth" ... This is the first time I've heard of it …Said so, it may be dreamy, but in fact it is mostly a big risk. In the event of an operation, whoever performs it loses his own life. It is only in exchange for the latter that the operated person can obtain eternal life.An operation whose price to pay ... is death …We can no longer count the individuals who covet this fruit, but you also have all those, very many, who wish to use the holder of his powers. That's why, Law, you should never tell anyone else that you ate it. If you ever talked about it, people would suddenly appear to get

their hands on you and force you to perform the rejuvenation operation. Now you know how the fruit of the scalpel can drive men crazy and lure them in with the obscure vote.

I listen to Wolf and understand everything.

"Since he ate the fruit of the scalpel, I will have to educate him so that one day he will agree to die for me !!"

I remember those words Doflamingo said when Cora tried to protect me.

He therefore intended to use me to perform the rejuvenation operation and obtain eternal life in exchange for my own existence.

Hence Cora's attitude towards me …

Chapter 18

A guy who looked after me in the past had said something similar to me.Okay?He warned me that between the pirates, the Navy and the Government, I would make a bunch of enemies by swallowing this fruit. He also told me that I should focus on my own survival. Now I understand better where he was coming from …From now on, even in your normal life, you will have to be on your guard. Because faced with the powers of this fruit, people lose their minds. You will be constantly assailed by the desire of these humans eager for eternal life.Aah...

What Wolf just told me upsets me. Even though I have learned the reasons why Doflamingo had it after the fruit of the scalpel, it is too late, I am no longer able to save Cora.

If only ... If only that power didn't exist!

Don't look gloomy, let's see.

Wolf rests his hand on mine, which was resting on the table.

I am not denying the powers of the fruit of the scalpel. In the documents that I had in front of me, I could see to what extent the successive holders of the powers of this fruit had made it possible to cure diseases that were believed to be incurable. In this sense, your powers are not nothing, they are even admirable.Maybe ... But on the other hand, they can also create problems for a whole bunch of people …So what? Don't be so narrow-minded! You are now able to heal sick people who would normally have to die. I was close to death a few weeks ago, and today I'm in good shape! Keep this example in mind! In itself, your power is not bad. Listen to me carefully, Law. If you plan to practice as a doctor in the future, there is no way you will do without a faculty like this. The problem is strength of mind. The more mediocre the result obtained. On the contrary, with a holder eager to help others, these powers immediately carry a different meaning. This is also the case with all power, right? Depending on the use made of it, it can turn out to be good or bad. And I, the Trafalgar Law that I know, I know he will be able to guide the powers of the scalpel fruit in the right direction.

With that, Wolf stares me in the eye again.

His gaze seems to probe my soul.

Seeing his expression, I answer him, while holding back my tears:

Obviously I'm that kind of guy. Nothing to do with "eternal life", me. The only thing I want is to be the best doctor there is. I will only use my powers for this purpose.

This is my statement.

For his part, Mister Junk seems satisfied with my answer.

Is that all you had to tell me? I would like to return to my room. It is late and I am sleepy.

It seems to me the ideal moment to put an end to the conversation and to go on their own. However, Wolf lets shine a „I don't know" that makes me say he's cloudy, he's hesitating.

Aah, wait, wait! Basically, I wanted to talk to you about something else.What? Something else?

Wolf struggles to keep going, his words stuck. Then he begins to scratch his head, as if his position is uncomfortable. Finally, while posing a slightly hostile look on me, he gives free rein to his words.

Is there something you fancy?What are you taking me out there?It doesn't have to be material. It could be something you would like to see, a place you would like to travel, any wish I might be able to make.What's the matter with you all of a sudden, Mister Junk? I'm happy with the life I'm leading, I don't want anything more. Oh yes, maybe. I heard that the fishmonger was going to receive exceptional specimens tomorrow, if you could buy some for dinner …But no, I'm not talking to you about that!

With an air could not be more serious, Wolf bangs his fist on the table.

You gave me a second life, Law! So I have to return the favor by offering you something equivalent! "Give and take", do you remember? Unfortunately, no matter how much I think, I can't find anything equivalent to "life". This is why I am ready to grant any of your wishes, as long as it is possible for me. For example, if you asked me to be your lifelong slave, I wouldn't find fault with it.Stop your bullshit, grandpa!

This time it's my turn to shout.

I didn't save your life to get something in return! Bepo, Penguin and Shachi did not do this either! You, you have the right to live with the convictions which suit you, it is your freedom. But them ... Knowing that you are out of the woods made them so happy that they whined ... That is more than enough for them! They don't ask for anything more! You insult their tears by thinking like this, and that I will not tolerate!

Wolf frowns, remaining silent. A certain quietude invades the room for some time.

Well, since it's like that …

Wolf is the first of us to open his mouth again.

Forget what I just said. And forgive me for disrespecting you.If you understand, this is the main thing.I understood that you ...well, you were able to act disinterestedly.Shachi, Penguin, and Bepo don't think about this sort of thing. They are grateful to you for bringing them out of their misery. So what could be more normal that they were desperate to save your life, eh?What about you?Hmm ... Me, I ... As a beginner doctor, it is my duty to come to the aid of any dying

person ... Le ... Let's say it's like a whim for me!He he he! It's okay, I got it. Still, your saved the day, it's undeniable. It is therefore inconceivable in my eyes to stay without thanking you.But ... Since I told you that …Yes I know! Listen to me until the end! Now that I know it would be rude to give you things or money ... I have to find a different way to thank you ..Go ahead, abbreviate! Spit the piece that we finish once and for all!Well I have decided to become your friend !!What?

His words are so unexpected that they leave me speechless.

Just a minute ... wait …

He said „friend"?

No, I'm falling asleep, I certainly misheard.

Sorry, Mister junk, but I think fatigue causes auditory hallucinations in me, will you repeat?How many times will I have to say this ?! I, Wolf the inventor of genius, agree to become your friend! Be honored!

What is this madness? No, but seriously, what is this delirium ?!

Ha ha... Ha ha ha ha ha!What are you laughing at?!Nothing, nothing at all. All right, Mister Junk, we do like this. Thank you, I accept your token of gratitude. Now we are friends!Phew...

Turned red as a tomato, Wolf stands idly by.

No, but what a joke.

What joke!

„Friend".

Such a trite word that should be so easy to pronounce.

But since we've been living under the same roof, I've gotten to know Wolf and understand what kind of man he is.

For him, the notion of friendship is outside the sphere of "give and take" which is so dear to him.

In a space where there is neither loss nor profit.

The only thing that matters in becoming friends are the feelings you have for each other.

This is why someone like Wolf, who has had the "give and take" ankle to the body all his life, needs immense courage to pronounce a word as simple as this one.

This is also why I would lack class if I did not respond favorably to his desire for friendship.

Alright, Mister Junk, let's be friends. Besides, you'll be nice to cook me a little supper to start.I think you are confusing "friend" with "handyman"!

We look at each other and we laugh. I don't know if it was our voices that woke Bepo up, but we can hear him coming down the stairs.

Mister JunkMh?The three of them, they are not part of the "others", are they?Obviously not.In that case, I'm going to say a word to them about the fruit of the scalpel.

Neither "strangers" nor "family", our ambiguous relationship is that of "friends".

However, in my eyes, this is the way of living together that suits me best, the one where I am most comfortable.

There is no doubt that the holidays will continue for a long time to come.

***

Three years passed thus.

Volume 3

Chapter 19

A child is crying.

Cries of terror.

A city is on fire.

These dear ones whom I called father and mother, my sister Lami too.

My family.

Helpless, I can't save anyone, I can't help anyone.

Everything disappears in the fury of the flames.

Me, I run all over town. I want at all costs to help someone, to save a person.

But no, my wish is not coming true.

While a world of ashes stretches as far as the eye can see before my eyes, completely charred corpses lie at my feet.

This is the dream I had.

When I wake up with a start I have been sweating so much that my pajamas are soaking wet.

Law ... breathes Bepo besides me, in panic.

He was sleeping right next to me.

Sorry, I didn't want to wake you up.It's nothing. I'll get you a drink.That's nice, thanks.

In the past few days, I haven't had a good night's sleep. I can hardly fall asleep, and when I finally do, I quickly get dreadful dreams.

I know perfectly well the cause: the front page of the newspaper of five days ago. An article on Dressrosa.

"Doflamingo! A new king for Dressrosa!"

This title alone is enough to make me dizzy. As if all the dots had suddenly been connected to each other to form a single line. Doflamingo was already pursuing this objective at the time when I was living within the Family.

The article explained:

"In the land of Dressrosa, a land known to be a 'symbol of peace', the ruler recently lost his head and massacred his people. The pirate Doflamingo put an end to this madness, before taking the place of the former king on the throne and bring calm to the city ... "

It was a plot, everything had been arranged. I had no proof, but I was convinced of it. This so-called madness of the King of Dressrosa was certainly the work of Doflamingo, who had pulled the strings.

At the same time, I understood something else.

Corazon had given me his missive in order to prevent this tragedy. On this message would depend the salvation of the kingdom.

I couldn't take it anymore, it was too much for me.

If only I had given this mail to another Marine.

If only I had understood Corazon's intentions earlier.

No, even better. If only I had never met him!

A crowd of "ifs" crossed my mind.

I knew Corazon would hardly have been happy to see me analyze things like this.

But...

However...

But for me not to cry over my helplessness.

Three years had passed since Corazon's death and my meeting with Wolf. I was now almost one meter ninety (6,2 ft) tall and had grown strong. My knowledge in the medical field had increased and I had treated many patients in the practice of the city. Day after day, I trained, fortified my body and improved in combat. I was also able to use the powers of the fruit of the scalpel much better than before.

Despite everything, I was still a kid.

Even though I knew the dream long cherished by Cora, I was still an immature child unable to know what to do. I had only one certainty: the life I led here was important and I had to do everything to preserve it.

Deep inside me, a little voice told me that no, it would never be possible.

There is no way I could look away from the sufferings and regrets of Cora, my benefactor, in order to lead a happy life. Never. I still remember perfectly the last words he said to Doflamingo.

"Leave him alone now !! He's free !!"

I imagine that Corazon had thus wished to give his freedom to the little boy that I was by breaking the ties that held him back. I was the same, I definitely couldn't accept such a thing without flinching. Living free, carefree, surrounded by friends would not be enough to honor my debt. No matter what he wanted, I now had a responsibility to him. A responsibility towards the ideals he had wanted to protect.

How to do? How can I erase the hatred I felt for Doflamingo?

How to pay back Cora's love?

How can I one day know the true meaning of the word "freedom"?

Here, Law, I brought you some hot tea. I used the herbs grown by the old man. It seems that they calm and relieve.Really? Thank you, Bepo, luckily you're here.No problem. If you ever want to talk about it, I'll always be there.No, not for the moment. I haven't even managed to put my ideas in order yet. Sorry.Ok thank you.

With these words, we each go back to bed, ready to go back to sleep.

Hey, Bepo …Mh?Would you like to do something special?Hmmm ... Ah, I know! I wish we could all go fishing together on our next day off! Then we would have a barbecue on site with the fish we would have caught!I'm not talking to you about that. Me too, I love grilled fish, but that's not the question ... How to put it? I'm talking to you about something you feel like, something serious that you absolutely would like to achieve. You understand?Mmmh ... gently hesitates Bepo, his hand on his chin.

Noting my serious air, he began to think more seriously.

I think I would like to see my brother again.

Between two silent breaths, Bepo continues:

I like the life I lead today, with all of you, but from time to time I think of my brother. I wonder if he's okay, if he's not mistreated. Since I have been here, I have been studying navigation. I may not be very good, but I can at least draw a map. So here it is, I tell myself that one day, I would like to go looking for my brother.Oh ok.

"One day."

Sorry to have asked you this funny question. It's time to sleep now.Yes good night.

Vague thoughts then pass through my head.

Like Bepo, I too would like "one day" to go to Dressrosa. To tell the truth, I don't really know what I would do there, but there is no reason why I should never set foot there.

On the other hand, I have a feeling that as long as I use that expression, "someday", that day will never come.

Well, no need to fiddle with my brain, it's really time to go to sleep.

It's all well and good to think about the future, but I have a daily life to protect, here and now. A world to be preserved.

And that, it is absolutely forbidden for me to forget it.

Chapter 20

The next morning, I woke up despite everything in great shape. Is it thanks to the boisoon that Bepo served me? In any case, I slept soundly until the morning, without having nightmares. My ideas even seem a little clearer than the day before. It's simple, everything is clearer in my head. I tell myself that I will be able to work properly.

Ooh, but you look good today, calls out Mister Junk, laughing heartily.Why are you telling me that, Ossan? Did I seem to be doing so badly lately?You're kidding? Obviously you didn't look good on your plate. I had never seen you with such black eyes.Oh well, if you say so ... Sorry to have worried you for nothing.Pooh! It's not like you to react that way!

This is proof that I am not yet fully recovered.

Yes, yes, it's okay. I just had a few issues to sort out with myself. You won't see me looking like that again, I promise.Mh ... If you say so. It's your thing, so – the others also have zero morale.

With that, Wolf pats me on the shoulder and walks over to the dining table.

In these moments, Mister Junk has the delicacy of not getting too involved in the privacy of his interlocutors. Interventions like "What's bothering you, my little one ?!, or" Come talk to me, if you're in trouble "are definitely not his style.

I have known for a long time now that this way of being is precisely its kindness. It must be said that we have lived together for more than three years ...

With the old man, I feel like I'm on an equal footing, because he behaves with me as with anyone else. It doesn't encroach on my privacy like a father would with his son, no. He considers me an adult and always makes sure to keep the right distance. Which explains why I manage to flourish in this relationship.

On the other hand, I also know that if I asked him for help, he would listen to me with the greatest attention in the world and act without delay. He would do that with me, but also with Shachi, Penguin and Bepo.

This is what kind of man the old man is. He may prefer silence to speech because this food has the gift of generosity, we are all very attached to him, we respect him, and we laugh really well together.

While I continue to sic about anything and everything with him around the table, the other three go down in turn. Here we are all gathered for breakfast, like almost every day for three years. In the blink of an eye, we devour the fish cooked in soy sauce placed on a bowl of white rice. What a delight. I don't know if Penguin and Shachi have always had a knack for food, or if it's just that they love to cook, but although we have put in place a system of rotation, they are improving day by day. The poor cook that I am can only be grateful to them.

- So, Law, how do you like the catch of the day?

- Excellent, you're a real chef.

- Perfect! cried Shachi happily.

Following him, me first, then the others, we let out a small smile.

Yes, I know.

This place is for me a unique, irreplaceable place.

Once again, I feel it deep inside me.

The snow which until yesterday fell in large flakes has stopped and the sky is now completely blue. We get on our bikes and take the direction of the city under the benevolent gaze of the old man.

I cross an alley between the four seasons merchant and the bar, then after passing the sanctuary in the heart of the city, I arrive at my workplace, the medical office. It is the start of a new day.

- Hello, professor, I say to the doctor before putting on my gown.

Pleasure Town may be a quiet town, but the existence of a single medical practice and the polar climate of the region where it snows three quarters of the year mean that many of the inhabitants pass through our hands.

If my specialty was initially surgery, thanks to the many and different experiences that the doctor had offered me over the years, I am now able to treat the majority of ailments. I know how to cure the flu and other seasonal colds, of course, but I have also acquired enough confidence to tackle diseases of the lungs and heart, diseases where the life of the patient is at stake, those that do not forgive any mistakes.

Feeling the progress that one makes every day as a doctor in this way is far from being an unpleasant sensation.

- Thanks again for today, Law!

The fishmonger arrives with a neuralgia in his left hand now leaves the cabinet, greeting me with the latter.

And if...

And if white lead disease had never existed, maybe my parents, my sister Lami and I would be running a hospital by now. For a moment, the scene I imagine dazzles me. Oh yes, what happiness that would be.

But at the same time, I know that I will never be able to find this lost world.

I must no longer lean towards the past, but move towards the future. By carrying in my luggage the joy of having friends, as well as my many uncertainties.

At the end of the day, after examining the last patient, the doctor tells me that I can go. I put on my white coat, greet him and leave the medical office.

"Phew …"

I let out a big sigh. Of course, this work is worth it and I enjoy doing it, but caring for the sick all day is nonetheless exhausting. As I walk the streets of the city with the idea of eating something invigorating, I come across marine fish, sold in promotion, which I immediately buy. Imagining the face that the old man and Bepo will make on my return, I smile to myself.

At that moment, I realize that something is wrong with the surrounding climate.

Around me, I notice several people running, as if they were trying to run away. I also hear bursts of voices, cries of panic. A whole bundle of details telling me that this is not a simple street fight.

With a rapid step, I move towards the place of origin of the din.

- Pirates! someone shouts.

As I push my way through the crowd, I notice about thirty men who are strangers to me.

- Bring us some alcohol and some food! Hurry up!

- Come and fight, if you are not happy! You still have to be sure of winning !!

Among them, I noticed one who was holding a flag representing a skull with a gold coin in his mouth. No doubt, these men are indeed pirates.

Each face is more repugnant than the other, they allow themselves to make a noise, to stir violently and to claim completely insane things from the inhabitants. Among the people who have been beaten, I even see some acquaintances.

At the sight of this spectacle, I automatically am about to leap into the crowd. Impossible to keep my cool in front of all these people, usually so smiling, who are attacked.

However...

- Law!

Hearing the voice of the one holding me by the sleeve, I immediately come back to me.

I turn my head and discover Penguin, Bepo and Shachi.

- Here, they are pirates, remarks Shachi calmly.

- Obviously, yes, they fly the black flag.

- What do we do? Shall we prince them before they do more damage? Shachi offers, taking a position to be able to launch at any time.

- No, let's take a look at how things are going. They are about thirty, casually ... And even if there is almost only small freight in ... the two in the back are beefier, believe me.

Indeed, the only opponents that could pose a problem to us are these two. The first is a tall man, probably over two meters tall and looks like a sumo wrestler. He wears a mawashi * (belt worn by sumo wrestlers during training or competitions) over his dark skin tone and his hair is kept in a bun. Under the fat that covers his whole body, we can detect a powerful musculature allowing us to grasp at first glance that we are dealing with a real colossus.

The other is the more dangerous of the two. His oval pirate hat and his long, black hair down to the shoulders certainly give him the air of a frequentable young man, but I can sense an unspeakable madness lodged in his eyes. How his men stir violently all around him does not seem to disturb him. He remains impassive, seated on his chair, on his own. This man is most likely the captain. And for pirates, being the captain also means being the strongest man in the crew.

- Penguin, do you have a snail phone at work?

- Yes.

- Go tell Mister Junk in case, never know.

- Heard!

Penguin rushes towards the restaurant where he is employed.

Chapter 21

Well, what do we do?

For now, it would be wise to probe the intentions of this crew. If they arrived at ivi by chance, chances are good that a little gold and food will fully satisfy them, and then they will leave without asking for their rest. In this case, you might as well not irritate them too much.

While I am thinking about this, Rad the policeman comes running.

- Damn thugs! Stop that! I will not let you play tyrants in our beautiful town of Pleasure Town!

- Here is a courageous man ... Ah, but ... Rad, it's you! Ha ha! It's been a while!

- Artur Bacca ... What are you coming back to town for?

- Ooh, don't face that, Rad, you look terrified. I just came to smell the air of my good old native country. My men got a little angry, nothing particularly serious.

- Do you really think I'm going to gobble up the salads of the man who turned the city into a sea of flames twenty years ago? If you seriously imagine that I'm going to believe you without saying anything, then you're dreaming!

I don't get the whole conversation between Rad and the pirate Artur Bacca, but I understand that this is not his first attack on the city.

Anyway, it smells scorched. I know Rad well, he's a stubborn type and, at the rate things go, he'll soon be beating himself up against the thirty or so pirates. Moreover, the latter have already started to surround it.

I have a debt to him, out of the question to abandon him to his fate. Right when I am about to take a first step forward, the captain gets up suddenly.

- Come on, guys, calm down. It may be that by killing him we lose a precious, nay, an invaluable source of information. Let's try to chat calmly with our friends, okay? Ghe pa pa pa!

- A ... At your command, Captain! bellows a member of the crew in a frightened voice.

I suspected, this man is their leader. He only had to get up from his chair to appear even stronger.

- Law.

Back, Penguin addresses me, whispering in my ear:

- I told Wolf. He told me he was on his way straight away.

- Perfect. It is better that the old man is there if it ever turns into a general brawl.

Truth be told, Wolf is a top notch fighter. I've finally been able to stand up to him for about a year, but Bepo, Penguin and Shachi still aren't up to par when it comes to fighting. In a way, I feel reassured to know that he will join us.

Even so far, it is not certain that these pirates intend to start a battle.

We choose to remain silent and observe the exchanges between Rad and the pirate.

- Bacca, I'll ask you the question again. What are you doing here?

Fittingly, and without backing down an inch, Rad spoke again.

- Ghe pa pa pa! Do you want to know ... why am I here? I understood, yes, nothing more normal given the position which is yours.

- Two reasons led us to come here. First of all, we would like to rest a bit. We recently tried to go to the Grand Line. Of course, we were well prepared, but the difficulties we encountered lasted even worse than expected ... We encountered pirates at the entrance to Grand Line and were defeated. I have lost half of my crew and the remaining half have many casualties. We therefore need a base to recharge our batteries.

- Yes I see. Listen, Bacca, if you really need a rest, and if you promise me not to take it out on the locals, I might be able to get a place prepared for you where you will be comfortable. I prefer that than seeing you hurt my fellow citizens.

- Hmmm, unfortunately I'm afraid that's not possible, Rad. Because the second reason for our coming here far outweighs the first. Tell me, I imagine you've heard of "Swallow's Island Treasure Legend", haven't you?

Unconsciously, I swallow my saliva. I remember, Penguin told us this story some time ago.

- No, never heard of it, Rad answers the pirate after a short pause.

- Ghe pa pa pa! Come on, Rad! Don't try to lie to me! I saw you, you looked away! This is proof that you are hiding something from me!

No sooner has Bacca finished speaking than he has already bridged the distance which separates him from the policeman and lifts him firmly by the collar.

- Me too, you know ... In the old days, I regarded this story only as a pretty fairy tale. Normal, right? Who would seriously believe that this lousy little island could actually hide a fantastic

treasure, eh? However, on an island just off the Grand Line, we found it! Yes, we found a letter from Captain Ladoga himself!

That...

This name means something to me.

Yes, on several occasions, even when I was still living with the Doflamingo Family. This legendary pirate had managed to reach the second half of Gradn Line, the New World. It wasn't a rumor or a fairy tale, but a true story.

- Captain Ladoga's letter says the following: "My last hour has arrived. Certainly, I did not manage to realize my dream, but I lived in the New World a thousand and one wonders. I left my treasure. in a dream setting, on the island of Swallow. If you ever have the chance to find it, use it as you wish. " At first, I thought it was a sham. But after getting the handwriting analyzed and researching the time when the letter was written, it turned out that it was written by Captain Ladoga himself! This is why I am here today! To get their hands on this immense treasure, to make my crew even stronger and to brave the Grand Line again!

While shouting these words, Bacca keeps Rad's pass in hand and twists it even more. An expression of pain runs through the policeman's face. I no longer have a choice, I have to go ...

- Stop, that's enough!

This strong and authoritative voice is not unknown to me. And it immediately seems to calm the ardor.

Bacca releases Rad, who falls to his knees to the ground, suffocating.

But the situation has not improved for all that. We could even say that it has deteriorated.

- Mister Junk ... Damn, what is he thinking ?!

He's still hot-blooded for a man his age. But, if he misses his shot and the other launches at him, he might just stay there.

Against all expectations, Bacca does not move an inch.

On the contrary, his eyes are fixed on Wolf as if he had seen a ghost, and the cruelty that inhabited his eyes a moment earlier has given way to an expression of amazement.

- You ... is that you, daddy ?!

- That's a paycheck, Bacca.

Unable to understand what these two are saying, I stiffened for a few seconds.

I'm not dreaming, Bacca just called Wolf "daddy".

As for Wolf, he did not try to contradict him.

- Ghe pa pa pa! How many years has it been? Ten ... no, twenty years? I would never have imagined seeing you alive again.

- Pooh, you take the words out of my mouth. I thought you had died at sea for a long time, me.

- You have nothing else to say to your son after all these years ?! What a horrible father you are doing!

- I made things clear twenty years ago already by severing all the ties of kinship which united me to you.

When Wolf says these words, his gaze is bloodcurdling.

- Definitely, you haven't changed. You always find fault with everything I do, nothing is ever good enough for you.

- Obviously. As a parent, I had a duty to restore my twisted-minded son! I have always lived by staying true to my desires. In this sense, I rather have the impression of having been exemplary righteousness!

- Twisted? Me? Ghe pa pa! Not once in my life have I told myself that I was crazy! I have always lived by staying true to my desires. In this sense, I rather have the impression of having been of exemplary righteousness!

- Regardless, I'm not going to get into a discussion with you here. Just know that I don't tolerate guys who attack towns and villages and steal food and money before killing everyone and running away.

- Ha ha! I find you very arrogant, dad! In the past, however, you were part of my crew! And at that time, you were quite incapable of preventing me from satisfying my impulses!

- Indeed, I recognize it. I am a helpless father. Speech, beatings, I tried everything, but I never succeeded in correcting my son's perverse ideas.

I miss letting out a huge cry of surprise.

Chapter 22

What does the exchange that just took place mean?

That Wolf once ... was the traveling companion of this Bacca pirate?

I take a look at the side.

Penguin, Shachi and Bepo also struggle to hide their agitation.

- Indeed, you are right! I'm not the type to suppress my desires! So now daddy you know what you got to do, eh? Since the time you've been living on this island, you must have had some information about Captain Ladoga's treasure? Come on, spit it out. In memory of the good old days, I promise I won't kill everyone.

- Pah! This treasure you speak of has never existed. And even if that would be the case, you could always scratch yourself so that I would throw you any information about it.

- You're looking for me, aren't you?

- On the one hand, I highly doubt that you will keep your promise, and on the other hand ... you are the man who in the past reduced the whole town to ashes! I have absolutely nothing to give or offer to a guy like you !!

- Seriously, you continue to blame me for these trifles?

- Twenty years ago, you already tried to meet the challenge of Grand Line. For this purpose, you needed a large amount of food, water, as well as money. And in order to bring it all together, you came back here ... where you had lived ... and you went after the inhabitants you pillaged before wiping out the entire city! I totally refused your behavior, so I decided to leave the crew and live alone, on the edge of the island ... But I don't feel any less guilty about it! I did not know how to prevent my son from committing atrocities ... And I am here today for this reason! This time, I have a duty to stop you!

Wolf's vociferous voice echoes all around us.

Unlike the times when he remonstrates with us, the words he has just used contain a deep anger, an absolute determination.

- Dad ... Do you mean you intend to put a damper on me?

- Exactly. I won't let you devastate this town a second time.

- Ghe pa pa pa! In this case, you are now my enemy. That you were my teammate and my father in the past, it doesn't matter. I swear to myself to run over anyone who gets in my way !!

By pronouncing these words, Bacca raises high in the sky the two giant masses which he holds in hand.

As if in concert, Wolf in turn takes out a firearm from his lap.

- Bepo! Penguin! Shachi! Let's go!

- Woooh !!

We rush directly towards the place where Wolf and Bacca are. But the pirates stationed on the boat a moment earlier intervene and brandish their weapons.

- Where are you going, guys ?! they roar.

- The farm!

I dodge each of their attacks and hit them with the edge at the medulla oblongata to make them pass out.

- Tcha tcha!

- Hop there!

- Get away!

For their part, Penguin and the others progress by sending their enemies waltz with their bare hands.

These guys are way too weak to be a problem for us.

No, the worries will be Bacca and his sidekick, the gigantic sumo wrestler.

- Take this! "Abatou" shot!

I see Wolf aiming at Bacca with a weapon of his invention. A laser beam gun he showed me at home, powerful enough to spray a brick wall.

However, Bacca dodged the shot as if nothing had happened and passed behind Wolf's back.

- You decline, dad ... I immediately knew in which direction and when you were going to shoot. The crappy shot of an old crouton can't get the better of me!

With these words, Bacca crushes his two masses on his father's skull.

Wolf collapses to the ground, motionless.

Don't panic.

Above all, do not panic.

I hold back at all costs from rushing to meet Bacca.

Wolf is not so fragile as to slam a blow with a club. Penguin, who has rushed to Wolf, tells me:

- Law! Don't worry, the old man just passed out!

I would have preferred to see it myself, but the situation unfortunately does not allow it.

- Bepo! Shachi! Take care of the guys around us! Me, I take care of their leader!

- Heard!

I ran to plant myself in front of Bacca. Seen up close, he imposes even more.

One shot to knock Wolf out is no small feat. I'll have to stay vigilant. Neither one nor two, I decide that the timing will be essential.

Despite the heavy weight that his two immense masses must carry, Bacca lifts them up and spins them with tremendous ease. And given their long range, I predict that it will not be easy to approach me.

- Mmh? Here then, another funny guy. Who are you?

- I'm with the old man you just knocked down. We are colleagues, I answer without looking away from my opponent.

- Ghe pa pa pa! a colleague of my father! If this is really the case, then you are also my enemy!

No sooner has he finished his sentence than his masses fall on me.

How fast!

I avoided them as best I could, grabbed a salvaged brick on the ground and threw it in the direction of my opponent.

- Do you really think you have me with that ?!

Obviously, Bacca repels my projectile as easily as possible. But I had foreseen it. I threw this brick at him for the sole purpose of giving me a space to approach. Bacca thinks I came empty-handed, but he's wrong. There it is, the fault of inattention.

Because I took care to hide behind my back an iron bar picked up on the way.

The advantage is for me.

- Take this!

I grab the iron bar and strike point blank in the direction of Bacca.

Nickel. Given his position, he will not be able to dodge.

I spoke too fast.

The iron bar slices through the air without touching it.

- What ?!

Impossible.

I'm sure I've reached the top of his head. And yet, I didn't feel the slightest resistance. I don't even have the impression of having touched it.

- So, kid, you thought you won? Error of judgment! A very serious mistake!

In my chest offered to all the winds after the attack that I tried to strike him, I feel the masses of Bacca sinking.

- Shit...

Then he sends me forcefully behind his back.

- Law! Penguin yelped huskily.

- It's okay ... Everything's fine ...

Although trying to play the swagger to leave nothing to show, I still have the knees which tremble so much the shock was powerful. However, my opponent must especially not guess that I am weakened. I have to pretend everything is fine and not make him want to hit me hard.

- Is that all you're capable of? Strength level, it does not change much of the wild boars found in the forest.

Chapter 23

- When it comes to chatting, I see you always say, kid!

- No need to get your hands dirty with a crummy like him, Captain, I can take care of it very well! Me, Conny Boackenno, I promise to break his back without giving him time to say "phew"!

The sumo wrestler now stands at Bacca odds.

- Thank you, Boackenno, but it won't be worth it ... I don't like the look of that little shit. I will personally take care of killing him. Just join the others and suppress the inhabitants with them.

- Bou hyo hyo! Alright, boss!

- Ready for the next step, kid?

Bacca charge, I'm waiting for it.

Thanks to the exchange of blows earlier, I know I'm the fastest. I narrowly dodged his attack and slammed the bar right on the shoulder, as if I was countering it. The timing was perfect, my shot impossible to avoid. Despite everything, I still miss it. How is it possible?

Bacca wastes no time and comes back straight away. He attacks, I defend. Even if he doesn't manage to strike me yet, I clearly have the downside. My blows don't seem to reach him and my body won't take a second kick from him.

Suddenly our eyes meet.

He has the troubled gaze of the real villain, the one in which one does not read any hesitation. I only detected a deep desire to kill myself. He is clearly determined to finish me off in order to satisfy his ambitions. Could this detail be the source of our power difference?

I remember the nightmares of the last few days. Cora, Doflamingo, Dressrosa, I remember everything. I know exactly what I should do, what I absolutely should do. But I don't feel ready yet. I certainly promised myself to fulfill the desire long cherished by Cora, but for "one day", not for "now". This is why I remain hesitant, like a compass.

I feel that this hesitation prevents me from playing an equal game with the man in front of me. His vigor dominates me, crushes me, pushes me to index and makes my movements slower. If I don't do anything, it won't be long.

Bacca chooses this moment to stop all movement.

- Well done, kid, your agility amazes me. And even though I know I'll win anyway, I still like wasting my time. For this reason, you see, I'm going to go about it in a different way.

With these words, Bacca lets out a vulgar laugh.

I have a bad feeling.

- Guys! Hide in the buildings!

Neither one nor two, all the pirates next to me rush inside.

- What ... Shachi, Penguin, Bepo! Take the old man on your shoulders and pull yourself out ...

- Too late! Fusion wave!

A radial light of pale color escapes from the two eyes of the pirate captain. I immediately roll on the ground so as not to get hit. A shiver runs through my spine. This man is not a simple pirate. I'm dealing with a power holder of a devil fruit.

I don't know if this is related to my attacks not reaching him, but one thing is certain: this guy is not normal!

- You have nothing?!

- No, it's okay! We all managed to avoid the light! Bepo's voice echoes back.

I recognize my little guys.

- So that's it, did you play your last card? Unfortunately for you, you will need more to come to the end of my comrades and me.

Not very reassured at the idea of not knowing anything about the powers of my opponent, I try a big bluff.

- Ghe ... pa pa pa pa!

- What are you laughing at?!

- Nothing, nothing, but you move really very quickly. Managing to dodge my wave of fusion is a feat, you know ... However, if I may, you would benefit from being more attentive to what is going on around you ...

Suddenly, behind my back, I feel a threatening presence. Someone is slaughtering the blade of their saber on me!

- Han!

I turn around and somehow manage to block the attack by squeezing the blade with my bare hands. Then I send the sword and its owner to waltz in the air. Who can it be? a henchman of Bacca lying in wait? I look at the man falling to the ground, and ...

- You ... But why?

I am totally unable to hide my surprise ... It is the head doctor of the medical cabinet! He holds a saber in his hands and watches me absently. He has clearly lost his mind.

- You junk ... What did you do to him ?!

- Ghe pa pa pa! Yet I warned you to pay more attention to what is going on around you. Do you really think you have time to take care of him?

I feel like I'm being charged from another direction.

And this time there are two ... or three? no, much more.

I leap to the side and take refuge in a discreet place to take stock of the situation.

- What?

There are a multitude surrounding me, ready to attack me.

-Damn it...

Separately, they are neither powerful nor fast, and I would disperse them without problem with kicks. But I am quite incapable of attacking the people of the city. I recognize the fishmonger, the waitress of the restaurant, the manager of the tattoo shop ... A host of familiar faces. However, they stare at me with a gaze devoid of any emotion and approach with the sole aim of killing me ...

- Ghe pa pa pa! So, kid, what's the matter with you? I find you very slow, all of a sudden.

As if reading my mind, Bacca laughs at me and laughs.

He will pay me for it.

I don't know how he does it, but using the locals for such warlike ends makes me very angry. What if I also use the powers of my scalpel fruit? Maybe I could work out a solution debt?

As this idea matures in my mind and I'm about to launch "Room" …

- No do not do that! Shachi interrupts, grabbing me by the shoulder.

His hand blocked me just in time. As if he too had just read my thoughts ...

- Let's get out of here, Law, the old man's buggy is waiting for us. It is time to retreat to better prepare for our return. We can't knock down all our cards without knowing exactly what his powers are.

Hearing these words, my anger subsides and I manage to regain my composure. Shachi is absolutely right. To go on an assault without strategy or resources is tantamount to committing suicide.

- Okay.

I mumble these few words and rush away from Bacca.

- Are you packing up, kid? Ghe pa pa pa! I thought you were braver than that!

The pirate's provocations no longer concern me. Shachi, Bepo and Penguin are also lucid. This is really not the time to launch myself into a desperate assault. Since I am lucky to be able to count on my team members, it is my duty to know how to give up and let go of the laurels.

- You two, over here!

With his hand, Penguin beckons us to come. Bepo and Wolf are already installed in the buggy. As soon as he sees that Shachi and I are on board, Penguin sets off with a bang.

- Be careful, I'm going full throttle! Hold on tight, if you don't want to fall!

Then we go, leaving our enemies behind us.

I glance at Wolf, who luckily only has a minor concussion. And, when I turn around, I see not only Bacca and his crew, but also many inhabitants.

If I run away now, it is better to come back and save you.

On the road that leads us home, no one says a word.

Chapter 24

When we get home, we each take a shower and change our clothes for the sole purpose of recovering from our emotions. Then Wolf emerges and we all sit down to eat.

We first try to tell him what happened while he was unconscious, but the atmosphere is heavy. Even though we have a multitude of things to say to him, the power of the shock is still felt. The four of us struggle to put words into the events.

- Sorry to have embarrassed you so much. Wolf is the first to break the silence.

His serious face, with drawn features, speaks for him. Perfectly aware that it is necessary to discuss in order to put his ideas in order, he does not however know where to start.

- Are you going to tell us who these guys are, Mister Junk? What is the real relationship between you and Bacca?

- Yes, I know ... I can tell you ...

Bepo and the others remain silent and listen silently to the conversation. I imagine they know full well that the things that are about to be revealed are fraught with meaning.

-Bacca is my son, Wolf announces clearly, lifting his face downwards. Since his earliest childhood, he has always had a violent temper. In the process of stealing and fighting in town, he ended up being looked upon only with contempt. He who, twenty-five years ago, told me he wanted to become a pirate. While initially I strongly opposed it, I then began to hope that adventures at sea will make it happen and maybe change. I believed that by leaving to discover the world and by accumulating experiences, he would become a worthy and responsible man ... But it did not take me long to realize that I was wrong on the whole line. I went to sea with him as part of his crew. First, because I thought it was necessary to watch him. Two, because I had always dreamed of watching him. Two, because I had always dreamed of seeing with my own eyes the various inventions that could exist beyond the oceans.

At this point in the story, Wolf pauses and swallows a mouthful of tea. I am very well placed to know how difficult it is to evoke with others the dark past that lies dormant in us. So I do not rush him and I wait for him to resume.

- But in fact, far from softening it, the harshness of the pirate world has further perverted Bacca. In his eyes, the fact of injuring, killing and stealing has gradually become the norm. Then finally, by swallowing the fruit of the dissolution, he reached a level of unforgivable cruelty.

. The fruit of dissolution ... So like that, he is one of the holders of power ...

- Yes, quite. Thanks to this fruit, Bacca and his crew gained influence and saw the bounty offered for their capture increase. They have even become strong enough to want to brave the

Grand Line ... And I am not talking to you about the perversity of Bacca which never ceases to grow.

He used to stop at Swallow to steal anything of value there. At that time, I decided to leave his crew. Since then, I have been working alone on my inventions.

That's it, I see it a little more clearly.

- Now I understand why you live outside the city. You try at all costs to atone for your past mistake.

To my disguised question, Wolf said nothing. But his silence is eloquent.

- The first time we went to Pleasure Town together, you mentioned that the town was almost wiped out in the past. Did you want to talk about this time Bacca landed?

- Yes, exactly. At the time, I couldn't do anything to stop it. It was not for lack of trying, but I was defeated and many people perished. I then used the money I had to rebuild the city, but the dead never returned. I do not deserve the recognition that the inhabitants show against me, nor even the right to live near them. Pfiou …

Wolf lets out a deep sigh. Since I have known him, he has never seemed as fragile to me as he is now.

I am beside myself.

I have a grudge against this Bacca, this man capable of ravaging a city with a smile on the teeth. I also blame myself for making Mister Junk so weak by pushing him to tell us his whole story. Above all, I really blame myself for being unable to find the words that will give courage to my friends who are about to cry.

Although ... If it is, the problem is not there. My exhortations would probably not change the situation. In that case...

- Mister Junk.

- What?

- I am going to fight.

I announce my intention to Wolf with a cold, imperturbable look. No need for encouragement. Instead, he'll help him my way. Wolf and I are "now" that we need to move on. To stop always postponing to "later" what frightens us or what makes us hesitate, and take action without further delay.

Make up your own mind "now".

Deciding to go head to head in a battle against an opponent against whom I do not know if I will be able to win, and this, for all the people who took so much care of me.

If I can't do it, then no matter how much time passes, I will keep putting off what I have to do "later". And my wishes will never be granted.

Accepting to look at the present and face it as it is "now" is the only thing that can move us forward.

I am convinced that this is also the first step towards making Cora's dearest wish come true.

- I don't know what you're thinking or what you want to do. But I don't care, because I've made up my mind. With Shachi, Penguin and Bepo, we're going to go back to town and give Bacca and his gang a good beating.

- Law ...

- You are free to stay locked in your home, I will not blame you. But you have to know it's now or never. You must take the opportunity to free yourself from this feeling of guilt that weighs you down for so long. Am I right, Mister Junk?

Ten seconds, twenty seconds.

Wolf remains silent, head down.

Then suddenly he gets up and walks towards me. Then he waves his right hand high and slams it down on my head.

- Pah! Stop looking down on me! I don't need you to tell me, anyway, I didn't mean to run away! I just had a little slack, that's all. Basically, you're right. I am the only one who can liquidate my pass once and for all. I'll show them how I protect my city.

Without mercy, Penguin points to the detail that kills:

- But ... Didn't you tell us that Bacca had put you in misery when you fought against him?

- Huuh ...

And Bepo to add more:

- Since his time as a pirate, he must probably be even stronger than before, right?

- Mmmh …

Finally, like a coup de grace, Shachi concludes:

- How do you think you go about beating him?

- Argh ...

Each of these remarks having apparently hit the nail on the head, Wolf starts blushing like a tomato and stammering incomprehensible sounds without being able to retort a word.

- You usually spend your time teaching us, Mister Junk, when it comes to the essentials, we can't hear you anymore.

- H... How ?!

- Alone, you have no chance of winning. Without help, you will be unable to protect the inhabitants. But what I'm telling you here, you already know. It is for this reason that we are with you.

- Hmm ...

- We don't mean to let you down. We're going to square off with Bacca and his henchmen, and protect the city. Nothing could be simpler, Mister Junk, you see? We are no longer kids, we are no longer those kids you took in and took care of. This time it's up to us to play, up to us to protect you and what is dearest to you. Friends are good for that.

Wolf sniffles, then a slight smile appears on his face.

- Tss, listen to these pretentious little ones. You only need to grow a little taller to deliver president speeches. But hey, at least you helped me make up my mind. I trust you enough to put my life in your hands.

Without making it clear that he is submitting to our will, Wolf raises both arms in the air.

Everyone laughs.

The house finally finds its own atmosphere.

- And so, old man, now that we have decided to fight, we have to carry out some checks. First of all, can you tell us what is this fruit that Bacca swallows?

If we do not come to the end of Bacca, peace will never return to the city. This is why it is essential that we know as much as possible about his powers.

Chapter 25

The one who eats the fruit becomes a "soluble man". Bacca possesses the faculty of liquefying his body. Therefore, classic attacks have no effect on him.

- OK, that explains why I had the impression that my blows were slipping on him.

It is obvious that hitting water with an iron bar does not affect the liquid in any way.

- He also has a second power. His eyes emit a ray of light allowing him to manipulate individuals.

- A ray of light? Like hypnotism?

- To be exact, let's say it's more of a ray that melts people's hearts. You did tell me that the inhabitants attacked you, didn't you? Had Bacca fired his beam just before it happened?

- Yes indeed. On our side, we managed to avoid it, but the inhabitants around us were all affected.

- This is the "fusion wave". All those who undergo its ray see their heart dissolve and become its puppets. In the worst case, they are able to stick a knife in the stomach if he orders them to kill themselves.

- Yeah, I see, the ideal power for a scoundrel of his kind.

- At the present time, I bet that he is in the process of sprinkling the entire population with his department in order to make puppets that will obey him with his finger and his eye. That is why we must act as quickly as possible.

- Mh? You mean, before Bacca leaves town?

- No, no worries about that side. Bacca planned to rest and prepare to attack the Grand Line. He's going to stay awhile.

- In that case...

- The problem is the locals. Any human having been touched by his ray dies after twenty-four hours.

-What?!

- The fruit of dissolution has the power to melt everything, and the human heart is no exception to the rule. Then, having become a puppet, an individual has only twenty-four hours before seeing his heart lick for good. At this level, nothing and nobody can help him anymore.

A dark veil floats in the room again.

I think back to all those locals who were so nice to me, see their faces again.

No more joking. I refuse to let just one more person die.

- Do you know how we have to go about freeing these people?

- If Bacca falls asleep, of course, but also if he loses consciousness, his powers will be lifted. However, getting it to fall apart is a real feat. At the time of the confrontation, it is important not to hesitate to kill him.

As he says this, Wolf frowns. After all, Bacca may be the worst good-for-nothing, but he is also his son. We could easily understand that the latter did not want to kill him.

- Twenty-four hours, you say …

- Four hours have already passed since the start of the fighting, so we only have twenty left ...

- Here is the time which is allotted to us to return to the city and to defeat Bacca while trying to contain the assaults of the inhabitants without harming them ... It will not be pie ...

The current situation seems to plunge Bepo, Penguin, and Shachi into deep confusion.

What's more normal? After all, to say that the lives of all these people rest in our hands is just an exaggeration.

I'm not even wide either. For a while now, I feel the tips of my fingers quiver. This story of an invaded city reminds me of terrible memories. A city that burns, countless cries of terror, my parents, my sister Lami, mountains of corpses, Flevance, my homeland …

- Follow me, we go up to the roof.

Suddenly Wolf snaps us out of our minds. Without saying a word, we follow suit.

Once outside, we notice the rain clouds approaching. As if they had set themselves the goal of reflecting our state of mind. Grr, what annoys me.

- Let's go see what's going on in town.

- Huh?

- Thanks to the very high precision "voyzoloin" telescope that I invented, spying on what is happening there becomes child's play. You will come with me, Law, I made two.

The very moment I lay my eyes, with open skepticism, on this invention with its always ridiculous name, I let out a cry of astonishment.

I am not exaggerating when I say that, thanks to this telescope, I can clearly distinguish each silhouette. I didn't know Wolf was capable of making such instruments ...

- I suspected, they are now almost all under the yoke of Bacca ...

- Yes, it seems like it.

People, most of whom I know by sight, stroll through town, guns in hand, staring blank and looking haggard.

- Ossan, where is Bacca?

- In the temple. You are most certainly already passed by. The pirates rest in the temple of the god of the sea, in the center of the city.

- Oh yes I see. It is the largest place for miles around.

We check one last time that they are hiding well there, then we move away from the devices.

To be frank, the situation is more than delicate.

As the temple in question is located in the middle of the city, it will be difficult for us to invite the slightest clash with the inhabitants. And while we do our best not to kill any, I doubt we can attack head-on without doing any damage.

We must face the facts, our chances of winning are almost zero. For one, getting to Bacca will already be a hassle. And two, once facing the man, we will not even be able to touch him. Damn, but what a story.

We are at an impasse.

Without really believing it, I address myself to Bepo and the others:

- Say, guys, do you have any idea?

- None, sorry ... If only the polar bear that I am were born with a little more savvy ... I'm completely useless, better if I disappear ...

- Now is not the time to be depressed, Bepo! I'm the same as you, I don't have the slightest idea either.

- Aaah ... we all sigh deeply.

However, glancing over the side, I notice Wolf, smiling. He seems to have a certain, strange self-confidence.

- That's it, he blurted out in a voice.

- About what?! I retort then.

- I know! I found a way! It's going to work! I'm sure it will work, let's get ready quickly! We will then go to my lab!

The old man is ready to fight, he roars.

- Bacca will see what I'm getting hold of, we're about to play a hell of a trick on him !!

***

As soon as the preparations are finished, we get into Wolf's buggy, in the direction of the laboratory.

At such a critical time for Pleasure Town, even if it is a little out of place, I have to say that I am very excited.

I will be entering Wolf's laboratory for the first time. Although I have long asked him to take a look inside, he always stubbornly refuses. So when I think that I will finally discover what is most important for him, the result of his research and his many years of experience as an inventor, I no longer hold on to it.

We can reach the laboratory in just under ten minutes by buggy.

Only, there is no building or we will dismount. I only see a huge vacant lot as far as the eye can see.

While I think about it, Wolf pulls back and walks towards the center of the field. There is a buried metal hatch. The old man puts a key in the lock and turns it. Then there is a thud and the door opens …

Chapter 26

- Brilliant! Looks like a secret base! calls Bepo.

- I have electricity, but be careful, the stairs are steep.

Led by Wolf, we carefully descend the steps.

Bepo is right, one has the impression of entering a secret base. Even I feel like having fun, even though it's not my style.

After a spiral staircase, we arrive in a large open room. Before our eyes, an imposing quantity of inventions of all kinds. But they have nothing to do with the ridiculous ones you usually find at home.

We see miniature planes and wheeled vehicles.

A swimming pool filled with what looks like a culture basin.

Flasks, spouts and other graduated cylinders.

Thus wue axes, pistoles and sabers shaped with meticulousness.

So here we are in the laboratory of the inventor Wolf.

Despite myself, I literally remain stuck in front of the spectacle that awaits me. If the situation weren't so desperate, I would take the time to ask the old man about each of the experiments he is currently conducting with these props.

- So like that, Mister Junk, you're really an inventor ... says Bepo, unable to hide his surprise.

- Obviously! Who did you take me for, you bastards ?! Alright, drop it. I thought it would take more to surprise you. What I really want to show you is a little further on. Law, take the sword, just here. Believe me, you will need it to face Bacca.

Wolf points to a saber tucked away in its scabbard. When I draw, a perfectly sharp blade is revealed. The weapon is also equipped with a mysterious button, but I decide not to investigate further and carry it as is.

Wolf continues to walk towards the back of the room to a staircase which he descends. I would have liked to stay a little longer here to observe everything, but our goal is not to hang around. So I grab Wolf with a quick step.

Arrived at the end of this creaking staircase, we find ourselves in the dark.

A particular smell permeates the premises.

It looks like that of the tide. Would we be near the sea?

- Careful, I'll turn on the light.

With these words, Wolf lights the lamp he was holding in his hand.

- We ... Are we in a cave?

Surrounded by rock and sand, the place where we are now has absolutely nothing to do with the play earlier.

- No one in town knows about the existence of this secret cave. As for what I wanted to show, voila!

We all turn our heads in the direction indicated by Wolf.

- Wow, it's gigantic ...

A huge yellow ship, probably made of metal, floats right there.

Is this machine also part of Wolf's inventions?

Especially when you take a good look, this is not a boat like the others.

- Mister Junk, this boat, you ...

- Yes, you guessed right. I present to you the greatest of Wolf the genius inventions! The submarine "Hanamaru the invincible" !!

- It's all rotten like nooom !! we cried in chorus.

On the other hand, apart from the name ... the rest is completely incredible ... Right in front of our eyes, the yellow metal shell gives off a phenomenal power.

- We embark.

- Seriously?! cries Penguin, looking delighted.

- A little, nephew. This ship is the secret weapon which will allow us to come to the end of Bacca, proudly announces Wolf while sniffing.

Without understanding the true meaning of his words, we enter the interior of the submarine.

- Wow! we exclaim, completely in admiration.

This machine was not built for a show. The pilot's seat is equipped with a remarkable control lever. Many instruments and other measuring devices adorn the dashboard and reinforce the impression of being inside a real submarine. Bepo and the others are each already seated on a seat, from where they observe the outside and applaud in turn.

- So? Are you finally realizing the greatness of my genius ?!

- Yes, but I would like to know, me, how this magnificent submarine will be useful to us in our fight against Bacca. I wouldn't ask you if the battle took place in the sea, but the enemy is still on the ground.

At my question, Wolf literally bursts out laughing: "Kah kah kah kah!"

- Don't underestimate the power of this beast, Law. But for now, sit down.

Wolf settles down in the pilot's seat, checks all the onboard instruments and drives off.

- Injection of sea water into the main tank ... Operation of the propellers, normal!

At the same moment, a shrill and deafening noise echoes throughout the cave.

- Waaah!

- What is that?!

- My ears!

As much as we are, we plug our ears to prevent this particularly irritating sound similar to that of two pieces of glass rubbing against each other.

I remember hearing it before somewhere. It goes back three years.

One day when I was practicing sword handling in the garden, I heard it in the distance. This memory which resurfaces leaves me believing. It is about this story of "swallow which flies at the bottom of the sea".

- Mister Junk! This powerful song that the people of the island talk about, it wouldn't be ...

- Hmm, I suspected that you were already aware of this rumor that we are talking about in town. The extremely powerful sound emitted by the propellers of "Hanamaru the invincible" echoes in the cave and then reaches the ears of the townspeople and those who sail the sea! Here it is, the real identity of your swallow!

Everything is explained.

On several occasions, Wolf had made little break-in laps in the submarine. It was enough for someone to see the craft moving at sea just after hearing the shrill noise for the rumor to emerge.

"System, OK! All parts are green! Transmission started!"

"Klang". A noise is heard and the submarine submerges.

- Woooh, we really took the plunge! enthuses Penguin. From the window of the machine which has reached the depths, we can contemplate the seabed.

A crowd of fish swim in this transparent water.

I have the chance to observe an underwater landscape for the first time ... And I find it splendid.

I became unable to swim after swallowing a devil fruit. I normally would never have been able to contemplate such a spectacle.

But thanks to an invention of Wolf, here I am today admiring fish swimming quietly in the middle of the ocean.

Finally, Mister Junk may well deserve his self-attributed designation of "inventor of genius".

The submarine, which had first plunged vertically, now sets off on the coast. He is moving at high speed.

- Woooh! It goes super fast!

- A real racing car, I can't believe it!

While watching the landscapes change, Shachi and Bepo play crazy.

We have the impression that our body is one with the machine, as if we were speeding up, too.

At this speed, we should get to Pleasure Town in less time than it takes to tell. However...

- Hey, old man. In the end, you didn't tell me how you were going to go about it.

Chapter 27

Wolf doesn't answer me. He just chuckles while maneuvering his device.

- Here it is, slowly ... Hmm, the radars are OK. The temple where Bacca and his little band are located is just above us.

- So what?! It does mean that we will have to disembark to attack them! To then face all the inhabitants he manipulates!

- No no no! Not at all, you are completely irrelevant. I never intended to go on dry land. "Hanamaru the Invincible" was made from one of the toughest metals in the world! It is therefore strong enough to break any rock or mountain!

- No, don't tell me that ...

- Gentlemen, please fasten your seat belts. We will begin the ascent before splitting the ground.

- Huh?

- What ?!

- You're kidding?!!

- You heard that right. We will split the ground and enter the temple directly from the seabed! Trust me! Deployment of the spinning propellers!

- No, it's not true! say Penguin and the others.

I feel the same as them, I don't want to believe it either. I would do my best to cut it off that the old man didn't even bother to perform a stress test. But hey, at the point where we are, we might as well resign ourselves.

The submarine begins its ascent with an open grave, uttering an even more exaggerated "kiiin" than anything we have heard so far.

Then the count starts:

- Three, two, one ... Let's go!

With a crashing noise, the surface of the earth shatters and we leap out of the water.

- What is that?!

- Where do these guys come from ?!

- Name of a dog! We must warn the captain as soon as possible!

The startled voices of many pirates reach our ears.

You surprise me. In their place, I would also have a hard time keeping my calm.

But hey, too bad for them.

- The situation that presents itself to us is quite funny, don't you think?

Let's say rather that at this level, it only remains to laugh about it.

- I'm counting on you not to interfere in my fights, freelance ?!

- Speak for yourself, Mister Junk!

With that, we all leap out of the submarine five at a time.

The joys can begin.

Volume 4

Chapter 28

After years of being sure and practicing in real life, I am not lacking in self-confidence.

I first learned the basics of combat from the gang in Doflamingo and since living on this island with Wolf and the others I have perfected my technique and gained sheer strength.

However, these two periods are fundamentally different.

At the time when I was fighting alongside Doflamingo, only the desespor lived in me. I was only moved by the desire to destroy this world before I died.

But now my state of mind is different. Today, I want to defend people. The lives of the people of Pleasure Town and those of my friends are all at stake in combat.

I can't lose, I don't have the right.

To relax, I take a deep breath. Because if the leader that I am seems tense, the others will not be able to launch serenely into the battle and deploy all their forces:

- Let's go, guys! I forbid you to die, freelance ?! The victory belongs to us!

- Yeah!

While gripping the sword Wolf gave me tightly, I look straight ahead. Our enemies are more numerous than in the city. At first glance, I would say a good fifty, or even sixty. They all put on a contemptuous smile, as if they were convinced that their numerical superiority inevitably implies vocitory.

- Avoid underestimating us.

At these words, I give them a hostile look, which says a lot about my murderous intentions. The smile that my enemies used to display suddenly disappears. I scan the crowd, but can't find the two faces I'm looking for: the captain, Artur Bacca, and the sumo player who serves as his right-hand man, Conny Boackenno.

This fight will be simple.

If we manage to cross this group, find Bacca and Boackenno and defeat them, victory is assured. On the other hand, if we get knocked down along the way, defeat awaits us.

- Kids and an old crouton ... Stop igniting yourself! exclaims a pirate.

He swoops down on us with his sword, as if he had suddenly lost patience. At this signal, we too start to run. The four men directly in front of me attack, each in a different direction.

-What they are soft ...

I can see their movements like in a slow motion movie. I sink my foot into the chin of the first opponent who rolls down to the right and my palm of the first opponent that drops to the right and my palm catches the one who arrives in front of me. As for the one that appears on my left, he takes my knee in the pit of my stomach. Finally, I kick back to the guignoi chache in my back.

There they are all four on the ground.

- B ... Damn, he's very strong ...

I can hear one of them say these words perfectly. You should know that in a fight, fear always grabs the loser first.

Five six seven...

I continue to progress by chaining cons in the face of those who attack me. On the side, "yahhh!" and "tchaaa" reach me regularly. I take a look and see Bepo and his mastery of unarmed combat, Penguin who spears his attackers one after the other, and Shachi whose hatchet excels at destroying enemy weaponry.

It goes without saying that Wolf also knocks down everyone in front of him without any harm.

Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen ...

I lengthen them one by one without taking the slightest blow. Until the attacks stop. I then observe the surroundings and see that we five are the only ones still standing.

- The fingers in the nerz! cries Penguin.

- Like what, any training ends up bearing fruit ... adds Shachi who has difficulty in hiding his emotion.

- We continue like that until their boss and we blow his face! concludes Bepo, in whom the tension seems to be at its height.

Tss, these three are immediately overwhelmed by good humor. Wolf, on the other hand, has staring eyes straight ahead and frowning brows. He is right because the hardest part is yet to come. Everything will go wrong in the fights against Bacca and Boackenno.

- We run without stopping to the great hall! They are surely over there! Above all, do not think that they are of the same ilk as the abortions you have just eliminated! Wolf warns loudly.

The recently relaxed faces of Pegnuin, Shachi and Bepo harden.

- Here we go! I exclaimed, pushing open the door in front of me.

At this moment...

- Hakki Yoi! (Shout pushed by the referee during a sump fight, to prompt the wrestlers to act)

With a deafening noise, an immense mass of flesh and muscles gushed out before our eyes.

Conny Boackenno.

The surprise kick of this dark-skinned man, dressed in a mawashi and wearing a bun, instantly splits our group in two. Wolf and I managed to dodge his attack, but Bepo and the others were thrown to the side. As I prepare to help them, Penguin waves his right hand to me not to intervene.

- Law! Wolf and you, settle his account at Bacca! We take care of the sumo wrestler!

I can feel a little hesitation. Sumo is undoubtedly a tough opponent. But I also know that, if Wolf and I rescue them, Bacca will take the opportunity to attack us from behind.

- Law, we continue!

Wolf sees me procrastinating and grabs my shoulder hard.

- Trust them. They haven't pretended to train for all of these years, you know. The role of a leader is also to nod his head.

- Bepo! Shachi! Penguin! I trained you, so you don't have to lose!

- Heard!

Leaving their lively voices behind my back, I come to measure myself against the large door at the back of the valley.

- Hold on. Before entering, put this on your eyes.

- What's this?

- Miniature lenses. The hypnotic ray of Bacca acts on the eyes. These lenses will screen.

- Thank you, they are just right.

- The idea had been trotting in my head for a long time. I knew I would one day have to quit Bacca, so I took the lead and made them.

A fight against his son. I hardly dare imagine Wolf's pain and inner tension ... But now is not the time to bother him with it. I silently apply the lenses he just gave me to my two eyes.

- Here we go, Mister junk!

- I follow you!

We open the door.

- Hi Dad. And ... Oh, who do I see? The kid who took his legs has his neck the other day!

Artur Bacca stands in the middle of a hall dotted with several large pillars of white marble.

Finding myself face to face with him again, I feel the pressure mounting.

- Ghe pa pa! Aah, dear father ... You are not unaware of the range of my powers, however, eh? We are already in the evening, in case you haven't noticed. In a few hours, tomorrow morning to be precise, all the inhabitants touched by my radius will lose their lives. So you two, driven by this ridiculous sense of justice, come to kill me. I am right?

Bacca's provocative tone doesn't seem to trouble Wolf in the least.

- No, you're wrong, my cause is not so noble. I just came to give you a little moral lesson, because I feel responsible for your education.

- Ghe pa! After all, whatever the reason. One thing is certain, I am going to run up against you both here without further delay, and I will then take the time to travel around the island to look for the treasure. It's that simple!

Chapter 29

Laughter repeats it once again. There is no treasure on this island, Wolf murmurs in a thin, almost tired voice. Because Captain Ladoga's letter is real! We are talking about a pirate whose bounty was considerable. Not the type to tell stories in a letter having at least as much value as a will!

- I'll tell you otherwise. The treasure has already disappeared.

-What do you mean?

For the very first time, Bacca hints at a hint of concern.

- Tell me, Bacca, do you know at least how we got to this temple?

- Eh? Yeah, you popped out of the water aboard your funny submarine. It made a thunderous noise, normal that I bothered to take a look.

- Launch at full speed, this submarine can break the ground. To make such a strong machine, I needed extremely strong metal, and a lot of it.

- What are you trying to tell me?

- To sum up, this submarine was designed using rock-solid metal. And given its size, I must have gathered a lot.

- What are you talking to me about? I asked you a question!

- I come to the problem. Even you, you must know that it is not easy to get your hands on so much metal. And I am neither from the nobility, nor become extremely rich during these last years. So how do you think I got all this stuff?

- You ... No!

- Yes, Bacca, things have certainly unfolded as you suspect. Captain Ladoga's treasure did exist ... but several decades ago! And I found it!

- That...

- That was a nice sum. Thanks to this money, I put the city you destroyed back on its feet and built this submarine. I also moved away from the life of misery that I led before. So you see? In the end, I put it to good use. Ha ha ha!

At this moment, the atmosphere in the room becomes so freezing that I wonder if the temperature has not suddenly dropped. Bacca said nothing more. He is like an envelope of pure anger and murderous desires which are just as much.

Two seconds, three seconds.

After staring at us with hostility, he directs his gaze to the ground and sighs deeply.

- Phew ... I see, yes, I see. It's the game, after all. A treasure always goes to the first to find it. Ha ha, you had me well on that one ... If only I had known that my father would take me by surprise ... I would have made sure to eliminate you the day you had announces that you are leaving the boat …

He pronounces this word as if he had given up something. However, the powerful evil aura he exudes does not weaken.

- But hey, at least it has the merit of simplifying things.

Bacca's gaze turns to us again.

- I am not discouraged so far. I'll just have to dismantle the submarine and sell all the metal in it. Only the procedure changes ... But to achieve it, yes ... I must liquidate you all here!

I see Bacca's hands disappear behind his back ... to emerge with each a giant mass.

- No need to beg me to spare you, it's too late for me to forgive you ... I'm going to crush you, crush you! Prepare for a terrible death! he cries out.

- Law, he's coming!

- Yes!

In perfect coordination with Wolf's voice, I put myself in a fighting stance. Serious things will start.

- I'm going to end it once and for all making you my puppets! Fusion wave!

From Bacca's eyes escapes a ray of pale color that we don't even bother to avoid.

Although he touches us head-on, we remain unmoved.

- Heiiin ?!

- What did you think? I have taken the necessary measures against your wave of fusion for a while! It no longer has any effect on us.

- Oh oh! I don't know how you did this, but I can see that you prepared yourself well. Which, in itself, is not very serious, because even without my wave of fusion, I cannot lose against you! I'll tear you to pieces with the help of my masses!

In doing so, Bacca waves his arms in our direction several times.

Wolf and I somehow manage to dodge his assaults.

He's not the same man he was in our fight in town. His blows are so heavy that just one of them would be enough to smash our skeleton to pieces.

- Ghe pa!

Its masses smash the ground right next to me. I take advantage of the brief moment when the assaults stop raining to kick him against. However...

- Trocadero!

In the blink of an eye, Bacca's body liquefies. My hit does not inflict any damage on it, as if I had just hit in the water.

- Ghe pa pa! You didn't learn the lesson, kid! You should know though that your attacks can't hurt me, right? I'm going to break your skull without you being able to react!

And shit! This fight is anything but fair. He will equalize us, and as soon as we can no longer avoid his blows, it will be the end of us. It is completely absurd.

- Law, over here!

Wolf grabs my arm and pulls me forcibly towards him.

- What's going on, Mister Junk? Running away won't help matters.

- I know it. But I did not embark on this story without planning anything.

- If you have a plan, let me know right away.

- You're going to get away from Bacca. For my part, I will run in all directions while waiting for an opportunity to present itself. At that precise moment, you will attack him with the blade that I gave you.

- To do what? You saw that my blows did not reach him.

- Have a little confidence in the genius that I am! Everything will be fine. With this sword, you can be sure to touch him, believe me. With that, I'm counting on you.

- Understood!

Wolf stops moving and rushes towards his son without further delay.

As for me, I observe the weapon in my hands. This is a perfectly ordinary blade with a classic handle. No apparent curve, the blade runs straight over its entire length. How would it make sense to pounce on Baca with this sword?

I have no idea, but I have complete confidence in Wolf.

He told me he would create the opportunity. That if I took the opportunity to touch him, he would mope. In this case, I just have to wait. And to leave it to him.

- Take this!

Bacca utters a cry. One of its masses hits Wolf's abdomen head-on, but Wolf does not waver. He takes the hit and gives me a look that means, "It's now or never."

I check that Bacca is not directing his attention towards me and as I rush towards him.

- Law! Push the button on the handle!

Similar to a howl, Wolf's voice echoes throughout the room. Hearing it, my body reacts naturally.

With my thumb, I press the button, raise the sword above my head, and slaughter it on Bacca. I don't feel any resistance. I just feel like I swung my sword in the water. However...

- Aaah! suddenly shouts Bacca.

It is certainly proof that he is in pain. But why? I wonder while observing my saber. The blade is as though enveloped in lightning. and I hear a crackle.

- What is that? a liquefied Bacca wonders in a surprised voice.

No doubt he was touched. Now is he mistrusting me? Still, he folds up with a leap to put some distance between us.

- Law! This saber is a work of my genius, its name is "hyper electro sword"! By putting this button on, the blade is adorned with electricity! It can thus affect Bacca, even in its liquid form!

Chapter 30

Let's put the choice of the name aside, and recognize that this is exactly the asset we needed. No need to slice it or seal it with blows. He will feel the pain, whether it is solid or liquid. I just have to inflict a few powerful electric shocks to him to finish a good deal for all with him!

- Definitely, Mister Junk, you will never cease to amaze me.

While he retreats a little more, Bacca observes us behind the scenes. It's now or never!

- Room!

Without any hesitation, I use my scalpel fruit powers. An imposing dome covers the area, which has now become my territory.

- Argh ... You too have the powers of a devil fruit!

Too late.

- Shambles!

The pieces of a collapsed marble pillar lie right in the direction in which it retreats. I immediately inverted my position and that of the pillar.

- That...

Teleportation.

Impossible for the pirate to understand how I was able to cross so suddenly the distance which separated us to find myself behind his back.

- Done!

With speed, precision and accuracy, I slaughter the electrified blade of my saber on him, as if I were going to slice him in half.

- Gwaaah!

Bacca's body is seized with convulsions. Each of my electric shocks inflicts serious damage on him. Two hits, then three, then four. While he writhes in pain, I chain attacks without giving him time to breathe.

- Ghe pa pa pa!

Despite everything, Bacca does not collapse. As I am about to give him a fifth blow, he liquefies himself completely before running away, crawling on the ground.

- Haaa ... He hid his game well, the guy ... I expected anything but that ...

This time it's my turn to be surprised.

Looking at the way my saber lights up, we guess at first glance that it emits a powerful electric discharge. Any normally constituted person would have lost consciousness on the first attack. And yet, Bacca continues to observe us with his hostile and cruel gaze. Why does he not admit defeat? How can he keep this expression?

I am then assailed by the same sensations as during our fight in town, by the same anguish. What sets us apart is determination. It's not about right or wrong, no. Bacca is simply approaching this fight, determined not to lose. But I ... am I resolved to face the ardor of this enraged pirate?

- Raah, piss off!

Getting lost in these kinds of mistakes in the middle of the battle ... I couldn't have chosen a worse time. I bank on Bacca again and hit it several times. I start again, again and again, until he can no longer take the discharges. But nothing helps, the pirate remains standing.

He holds on, takes the pain and even finds a way to approach me with that killer gaze.

I slide. I glance at the ground and notice a puddle of water. Bacca made part of his body liquid so he could trap me!

- Damn!

- Ghe pa pa pa pa!

Its mass spins on me at full speed and I know that I am going to lose my balance. Impossible to avoid it.

- Laaaw !!

Right when the resignation begins to invade me, Wolf intervenes, takes me in his arms and leaps away. However...

- Mister Junk!

Wolf takes his son's violent assault right in the back.

- Argh ...

Blood is flowing from his mouth. His organs have probably suffered quite a shock.

- It's okay, don't worry. You too, you know very well ... that the older we get, the more robust we become.

- Stop, this is not the time to boast! Scan!

I use the powers of the scalpel fruit to examine its insides. He has a few squared dimensions and lesions on some organs, but nothing to deny him. Considering the state of his injuries, I should be able to save him.

- You went too far, Pops, you'll regret it!

But no sooner have I started first aid than Bacca rushes at me. My turn, this time, to carry Wolf and throw myself on the side to get out of his attack zone.

- Forget it, Law ... Don't even imagine treating me now ... Sorry for having become a burden ...

- Han ...

- Do not worry about me, it is not today that I will pass the weapon on the left. For you and for the others too, I will not snap so easily! Settle his account at Bacca. You can win, I know it. It is a genius who guarantees it to you.

- O ... Okay …

Nodding is the only thing I can do.

- Oh oh, so like that, the father falters first and I only have one more mouflon left to get it over with? I didn't expect it to be that easy.

Bacca splits a contemptuous smile suggesting his certain victory.

- If I were you, I would avoid smiling stupidly. I remind you that you haven't touched me once yet.

- Ghe pa! On the other hand, when it comes to having a big mouth, Monsieur is worth two adults all by himself. Come on attack me with that saber you're so proud of!

Above all, I keep my cool. Bacca is not in top form either, he is content to stand up. As long as I stay focused and don't let myself be distracted, he will have a hard time touching me with his masses. So I have the advantage. I position myself in front of him and shoot my gun down.

- Woooh!

Our paths cross. While he takes the electric discharge from my saber head-on, I avoid his blow. I can do it. If I keep attacking, I can win. I then realize that something is wrong with my right hand. The sword suddenly seems terribly light to me.

- ...

I look at him, and .. can't find the words.

The blade is gone!

- H ... How is that possible?

- Aah, I recognize that expression on your face, kid. It is that of an adversary who understands absolutely nothing about what is happening to him.

Bacca speaks to me, delighted, while I remain speechless.

- You never asked yourself how your shots hit their target a little too easily?

Indeed, since the start of our fight, something was wrong. Even when he could have avoided my attacks, he didn't bother and took them. The blade of my saber lies right there at my feet. On closer inspection, it is partly decomposed, eaten away by rust. OK, everything clears up.

- That's it, do you understand? I made it express not to dodge your blows in order to alter the resistance of your blade! As soon as I go from a solid state to a liquid state, my Trocadero power allows me to control my acidity! When you started slashing me with the saber, I knowingly increased its degree. The strength of your blade has suffered without you noticing it, until it breaks. In other words, it is only your helplessness that is causing this situation! Ghe pa pa pa!

Impossible to contradict him. If I had noticed it earlier, I might have been able to remedy it. Especially since I did not particularly lack attention. Although at one point, I was convinced I had the advantage ... I should have been wary and suspect that it was a trap.

- Phew ... It uses a lot to use all this acid ... But at least we're fixed! You will never touch me again! Now it's my turn to bomb you! Ghe pa pa pa!

Wolf passed out. As for me, I am no longer able to reach Bacca. My breathing quickens, my heart starts to beat faster and faster.

Chapter 31

With his powerful kick, Conny Boackenno threw Penguin, Shachi and Bepo into a corner of the room.

- You guys have nothing ?! Penguin asks in a loud voice.

- No, it's okay!

- No problem!

Shachi and Bepo immediately emit a lively response. None of the three friends seem seriously hurt. This does not mean that their opponent is weak, on the contrary.

It was enough for him to push himself on them to throw them to the other end of the room. His build is impressive. Not only does it lightly exceed two meters, but also weighs, visibly, no less than three hundred kilograms. Dressed in a mawashi and wearing a bun specific to the profession, his membership in the world of sumo is beyond doubt. With his superhuman strength, Boackenno is a worthy representative of this famous struggle.

But the most astonishing about him is this rapidity which his appearance does not allow to predict. Despite a physique to say the least fleshy, even pot-bellied, Boackenno moves at such speed that none of the three have had time to dodge his attack.

- This guy's not just a big guy.

- No, in addition to being heavy, he is fast.

- He did not hesitate for a single second to take all three of us as adversaries. I think he has blind faith in his strength.

Each of them seems to have sensed the terrifying dimension of sumo rightly.

- Bu hyo hyo! I have been wonderfully successful in separating you from each other. My task of eliminating you will only be easier!

No sooner has he finished his sentence than Boackenno leans forward and stands firmly on his two legs.

- He is coming!

- Hakki Yoi!

He is rushing again on the three friends, exactly as before. Let's say it as it is: he is in fact content to give them a big blow of the stomach.

No refined technique or exceptional power here, only pure strength counts. On the other hand, Boackenno's worked musculature transforms this bodily assault into a true fatal technique.

- There are three of us to keep him!

Nobody flinches, all comply with Penguin's order and find themselves facing their opponent, ready to stop him in the Hakki Yoi position. No more carelessness: this time, they are all ready to receive his attack. But nothing helps, impossible to stop it. No matter how much they join forces, they can't compete with Boackenno's muscles.

- Gaaah!

Once again, they are thrown violently against the wall behind them.

- Bu hyo hyo! What a great bunch of incapabilities you have!

- Bepo! Shachi! We don't have to go all at once! Let's attack him by dispersing!

- Understood!

Before the next assault, they separate in different directions and position themselves in a circle around Boackenno. They did not exchange in a concrete way on the strategy to put in place. But in the three years they've spent together, Wolf and Law have instilled in them the fundamentals of the art of combat. How to deal with several to defeat an adversary, what it is to be "effective" in combat, or how to bring a duel to its advantage. At their side, they learned this kind of essential tactics.

To begin with, Bepo approaches the target and uses his kicking techniques. Then, Penguin grabs his spear and sends it at the enemy from a blind spot. Finally, Shachi delivers the final blow with his hatchet. None of them needed to exchange a single word to know that this combination would be the most effective.

- No matter how hard you rack your brains, you will need more to come to the end of me. Besides, I wonder which of you will I liquidate first ...

- Tcha tcha! I'm your man! Come fight, fat bacon!

Boackenno stops dead.

- Oh, the polar bear ... I'm not dreaming, did you just call me a "fat bacon"? This is the worst insult you can address to a sumo wrestler! I'll catch you and turn you into a meatball! Raaah!

Becoming literally red with anger, Boackenno rushes towards Bepo.

- Yatcha!

Bepo flanks without hesitation a kick returns in the stomach of his opponent. An irreproachable attack both in terms of strength and speed. However, Boackenno doesn't show the slightest sign of pain. The power of Bepo's strike has been entirely absorbed by the wrestler's layer of fat ... Unrestrained, Boackenno continues his course straight on him.

- Take that bear cub ... Doskoi!

With these words, he brings his two hands, palms wide open, down on Bepo's skull.

- Waaah ...

The polar bear immediately suffered a slight concussion. Penguin and Shachi immediately understand that their tactic has gone down the drain, but it is too late to end their offensive. Boackenno privote to himself in a series of alert movements before heading towards the two friends, hands still open.

- Doskoi! Doskoi! Doskoi!

The blows are raining in all directions, like a raging storm. They obviously hit Penguin and Shachi who are thrown into the distance, but also hit the huge marble pillars dotting the room. A few collapse, then, as if the whole temple had been hit, part of the ceiling collapses.

Luckily, no one is under the rubble, but Penguin and Shachi shudder in fear at Boackenno's Herculean strength. Penguin exclaims:

- Shachi, are you okay?

- Yes, I'm still alive ...

However, the violent slaps they have just received did not leave them unscathed and they are struggling to move satisfactorily.

- Phew, I think we're in deep trouble. If Bepo's kicking techniques don't have any effect on him, one of us will have to do it.

- I want to, but how to stop him in his tracks? I doubt we will be able to slice the bacon with a single blow of a spear or a hatchet.

- Especially that the next load that we wipe, we are sure to leave this temple feet in front.

- Yes, but hey ... We are not going to give up so close to the goal!

- Of course not. If we ever lost this fight, we would never be able to look the old man and Law in the face again!

Slowly, half staggering, they both get up.

- Bu hyo hyo! What a pity you are, exclaims Boackenno. You got bogged down by Wolf, and look at the result! You will die in excruciating pain! Bu hyo hyo! A miserable old man and a bunch of pathetic kids! I can't help but giggle!

Hands on his stomach, Boackenno laughed out loud. For their part, eyes frozen, Penguin and Shachi observe this spectacle.

-... from Wolf ...

- Hmm? What did you just say?

- I forbid you to make fun of Wolf! He raised us when we no longer had parents ... He took care of us as if we were his own children ... So I forbid you to fuck with him!

- Drank! Drank! Drank! On top of that you have no parents! Aah hyo hyo! You are even funnier! Ha ha, so funny! "His own children"? How can you be so stupid?! Wolf never cared about you, he just needed hardworking manpower, thank you! In the end, no one will ever love you !!

Penguin and Shachi remain silent but don't seem upset. No matter what Boackenno says, they know that all they have felt over these years is the strict truth. Wolf really loved them, and it will take more than the bacon's slurs to shatter this truth.

For the moment, only pure and boundless hatred feeds their resentment. Anger whose prey is none other than this pirate who spits his meptis on Wolf, hurts their comrade and does not hesitate to take the lives of the inhabitants to satisfy his desires.

- Shachi ...

- Mh?

- This guy made me mad.

- Yeah, same.

- No matter what it costs us, we're gonna blow it up.

Chapter 32

- I agree, let's go!

Without needing to give each other any signal, Shachi and Penguin leap towards Boackenno. They must at all costs reduce the distance which separates them from their adversary. Put their guns in his mouth before he has time to flank them each again a nice pie.

- Woooh!

Penguin brandishes his spear, spins it around at full speed, and plants it vigorously in Boackenno's shoulder.

- Raaah!

Immediately, Shachi leaps into the air and throws his hatchet into the wrestler's right arm.

This time, they felt resistance. But Boackenno does not stop moving forward. The pirate's flesh-and-fat barrier slows down the two friends, who do not cause him fatal injury.

- Damn kids ... By damaging my dream physique in this way, you have just committed a very serious fault!

Penguin and Shachi try to pull away, but Boackenno doesn't let them slip and grabs them firmly.

- You deserve a good correction ... Yokozuna bomber!

The leggy mace leaped high in the air, holding Shachi and Penguin's necks in each of its hands. Approaching the ceiling, he lets himself fall back with all his weight, ready to crush Law's companions. Crushed under more than three hundred kilos of flesh and muscles, they are incapable of the slightest gesture.

- Pff ... This is the real strength of a sumo! Now I suggest you die quietly. You can only blame your own weakness, as well as the old goat who led you in this galley ...

Their skeleton is broken in several places. The violence of the shock against the ground put their heads upside down. Despite this, Penguin and Shachi manage to get to their feet.

- Gnuuh ?!

However, Boackenno no longer counts the devious enemies he buried thanks to the Yokozuna bomber, his most powerful technique. Nevertheless, there, just under his eyes, two scoundrels get up after having cashed in full force.

Sumo finds this strange. They react like zombies. His punches, slaps, and lethal technique should have inflicted enough damage on them to kill them. But no, they are still very much alive.

For the very first time, the wrestler feels a kind of fear towards Penguin and Shachi. At the same moment, his gaze is fixed on Bepo's silhouette.

- Pooh …

Boackenno lets out a rude laugh.

- Ready to go back Shachi?

- Obviously! You can count on me to crack the skull of this junk ... Hey, but look at Bepo, what is he doing?

Penguin stares at his friend, sitting on the floor, looking absent and staring up at the ceiling.

- Damn, this is really not the time to meditate! Sumo will catch him!

Boackenno already has Bepo in his sights. Given his position, he will never be able to avoid a Hakki Yoi followed by a slap capable of shattering a rock.

"If I can manage to touch this helpless polar bear, I'll take his life for sure."

As he thinks about how to do it, Boackenno leans slightly forward. At the same moment, a strange shiver runs through his body.

- What ... What is it?

The warrior's intuition then hinders his movements and prevents him from moving forward. Through a hole that formed in the ceiling. Bepo seems to be watching the sky. It is difficult to say whether he is conscious or not, but he is ready for any attack.

In the depths of the dark night the moon shines. A full moon which draws a splendid circle.

- Bepo, get away from there!

- Boackenno won't seem to reach him.

Under the spell of the full moon, Bepo keeps his eyes wide open towards the sky.

- Pooh ... The threat that I thought I felt was only the fruit of my imagination! I will send you to the Hereafter without further delay! Hakki Yoi!

This time it's the right one. Boackenno's gigantic body rushes towards Bepo.

- Bepooo!

As Shachi and Penguin scream in vain, the Colossus crushes Bepo. At least that's what should have happened.

- What ... what? exclaims the wrestler.

Because the reality is quite different.

Boackenno's Hakki Yoi was stopped by Bepo's only right hand waving forward.

- Yatchaaah! exclaims the polar bear.

His voice is no longer exactly the same.

It is rougher, more brutal. With a thud, Bepo begins to change his appearance. He grows up. Its size exceeds that of begins to change its appearance. He grows up. His height exceeds that of Boackenno and he quickly reaches three meters. Finally, its white coat grows in turn, until it completely covers its body. All in an almost divine momentum. Neither Shachi nor Penguin, let alone Boackenno, understand what is going on in front of their eyes.

Bepo has just changed into "selenite lion", better known as "sulong". When they watch the full moon, members of the Mink Tribe access their forgotten memories and effect a warlike transformation.

- Penguin, what's wrong with him?

- No idea, I just see that it has become gigantic! We will have to bet everything on him! Bepo, crush that damn sumo wrestler!

It is difficult to say if Bepo understands the words addressed to him, but he casts a hostile look on Boackenno, thus seeming to respond favorably to the call of his comrades.

- Wooaaah!

He swirls his arms, ready to correct his opponent as he should.

- Gnuuuh ...

Boackenno warded off the bear's heavy assaults as best he could with a desperate air. But the heaviness of the attacks that rain is no longer comparable. Even he who can however boast of being as solid as a rox, would risk falling in the apples if ever he were to take a blow in the face.

His past experience of combat revives as much as possible the awareness of the looming danger.

- Doskoi!

Boackenno stretches out both arms and steps forward in front of Bepo.

- Woooh!

- Doskoi! Doskoi! Doskoi! Doskoi!

An exchange of strikes of rare violence then begins and gives the impression, seen from the outside, that the two fighters are of identical size. A blow sufficient to lengthen definitively their adversary, one like the other does not grant each other any respite. In speed as in power, they are almost equal. The duel continues, each attack of one being parried by that of the other.

Except that, between Bepo who got carried away and acted without thinking, and Boackenno who, despite his surprise, makes a clear judgment on the situation, the difference widens.

- Now!

Bepo hits a big blow in the wind. Boackenno seizes the opportunity and steps into the bear's lap to grip its hips firmly, as sumo wrestlers do with their opponent's mawashi.

- Woooh ...

- You are amoiii!

Boackenno rises in the air with Bepo in his arms.

- Yokozuna bomber!

The sumo wrestler intends to immobilize his opponent in the air by locking his joints, then to make him fall and fall back on him. At this moment of the fight, Boackenno acquires the intimate conviction that the victory belongs to him. What would be strange if it ended up like this?

Only, the wrestler omitted one point: the primary instinct of the warriors of the tribe of the minks.

Bepo is not endowed with "reason". Complex thoughts do not occupy his mind. He simply feels threatened as he senses the future impact against the ground.

But that is enough for him. His instinct as a warrior makes him act in the most efficient way possible.

- Waaah!

Chapter 33

In the midst of a fall, Bepo suddenly releases the strength he had accumulated until then. Remember that the bear's weight exceeds that of the wrestler and that the latter's deadly technique, Yokozuna bomber, uses his weight precisely to crush the opponent. Here is where the error of calculation is. Since this technique is fatal for the opponent when he uses it, it is also equivalent to killing oneself in case of reversal of positions.

- Gnnnaaah!

With a monstrous roar, Bepo breaks free from the hold of his enemy and takes his place. Boackenno's Yokozuna bomber turns on him!

- Gnuuuh!

More than two meters before landing.

- Woooh "

Propelled by the weight of the mink, Boackenno falls straight to the ground.

- Argh ...

Even a sumo wrestler, whose strength is nevertheless the main asset, does not imagine one day having to put up with his own deadly technique.

- Oh la la, business is spoiled ... It smells of russet!

In Boackenno's eyes, staying near Bepo is too risky. And too bad if Bacca does not punish him afterwards: he must move away at all costs. After a quick analysis of the situation, Boackenno gives a powerful hip kick to free himself from his opponent and jump back ... not realizing that he is making the biggest mistake of all.

- He Shachi, Penguin calls out.

- Yes Penguin? Shachi replies.

- Something flying is coming towards us.

. Oh yeah. Something we would like to unravel.

- I'll take the right side.

- OK, me, the left.

Boackenno, who has rushed to get out of Bepo's grip, doesn't bother to take a look behind his back. He did not notice the welcome committee made up of two fighters with mischievous smiles.

- One...

- Two...

- Three!!

They concentrate all of their remaining strength in their spear and hatchet raised above their heads.

"Kling". Penguin and Shachi's weapons slam into Boackenno's skull.

- Bu ... Hyo ... Not ... Hyo ...

Then the giant collapses.

Shachi rushes to him and finds that he has completely lost consciousness.

- Finished.

- We still insured like animals.

By exchanging these words, the two friends clap hands. The fight against Boackenno is finally over. Only...

- Waaah! Waaah!

Bepo is still in a daze.

- Wait, seriously ?! He didn't notice that he had knocked out his opponent ?!

- He seems to be only moved by his instinct!

- We have no choice, we must stop it …

- I don't mind, but how ?! Even if we catch him from behind, he will still give us a good beating!

Finger rests on his eyebrows, Penguin thinks for a moment.

- Full moon.

- Eh?

- Just before turning into a giant, Bepo was looking at the full moon. Even now, he regularly takes a look.

- OK, let's give it a shot.

- It works.

In his monstrous madness, Bepo destroys one by one the walls and pillars of the room. At this rate the entire temple is in danger of collapsing, and given their condition, Penguin and Shachi would not come out alive.

"Penguin use this," Shachi orders his friend, handing him his cap.

- Understood. I am the one who jumps, if I understood correctly?

- Absolutely.

- In that case, allow me to lean on your shoulders!

They both start running, Shachi slightly in the lead. And exactly when the latter stops a good distance from Bepo:

- Now, Penguin!

- I go!

The boy uses his friend's shoulders as a springboard and leaps into the air. Then he grabs Bepo's skull, goes behind his back, and covers his eyes with his own hat and Shachi's cap.

- That should ... do the trick!

Bepo's view is now completely blocked. The latter struggles, but Penguin holds on tight. Finally, after a few seconds, the bear's movements stop dead. And at the same time, his monstrous body and coat regain their original size. Objectig achieved.

- Hey, Bepo! Are you alive ?!

Shachi addresses a lying motionless Bepo, patting his cheeks.

- Mh, mmh .... Penguin, Shachi ... What happened to me? And Boackenno ... Where is he going?

Hearing their friend's voice, Penguin and Shachi let out a huge sigh of relief.

"Don't worry about sumo, we've settled his account," Penguin replies, without taking too much trouble.

- What? Seriously?! Phew, you are too strong ... To say that my foot-and-fist techniques did nothing to him ...

- Don't worry, you've done your part too, and even more, reassures Shachi.

- Yes, we can say that, Penguin smiles.

- Anyway, we'll give you the details later.

- There, we're at the end of our tether.

Worn out by the words they just spoke, Penguin and Shachi fall backwards. Then it's Bepo's turn, completely washed up by his episode of furious madness, to collapse. None of the three is able to move a little finger anymore.

- Say, guys.

- Mh?

- What?

- I think we won!

Shachi and Bepo remain believe for a short time before exploding into laughter in the company of Penguin.

But they have one last thing to do.

- We must join ... Law and Wolf ...

With a nod, Shachi and Bepo approve their comrade's injunction. They therefore set off again, dragging their bodies painfully and believing hard as iron in the final victory.

Chapter 34

Bacca conscientiously works to reduce my energy reserves. I can hardly see how I could win, but I can't run away. Whatever happens, I decided to help these people. Is it because new emotions have arisen in me? Because after all, I ended up behaving like a doctor? I just know that the moment I give up rescuing them, I will no longer be myself.

Use your head, damn it. Heat up your brains!

Somehow I have to find a way to beat this junk.

- Ho hoo ... Since you still seem to be overflowing with vitality, I'm going to offer you a little something ... which will have the gift of disgusting you, Bacca announces before taking a deep breath.

Fortunately I am out of reach of his masses: he is not able to touch me.

- If I were you, kid, I would avoid underestimating the power of the fruit of dissolution! My next move will get the better of you! Melty love!

A pale blue ray emerges without warning from Bacca's mouth.

- Han!

I lean more than necessary to successfully dodge it, then I glance behind my back and find a large hole in the wall, where the raxon hit. A sound of melting matter is heard.

- Ghe pa pa! My Melty love spits out an extremely powerful acid which liquefies everything in its path! Haa ... Let's see how far you can avoid it ... Melty love!

Bacca regains his inspiration before letting go again. The latter rushes straight at me but I manage to avoid it by jumping to the side.

- Melty love! Melty love! Melty love!

I concentrate with all my strength to avoid as best as possible this ray which he spits continuously.

That's why...

- It is the end!

I didn't realize Bacca was getting dangerously close to me.

- Ghe pa pa pa!

Its violent blow of lateral mass throws me against the wall.

- Argh ... Eurgh ...

Right in the lungs. I can no longer breathe, I can no longer feel my limbs. Damn, how annoying heartbeats can be when you find yourself lying on the floor like me right now! The heartbeats, the sound of circulating blood, the sound of my breathing, the trickle of electricity running through my body ...

From ... electricity?

- Han ... Han ... It's over, kid! After all, the desires were blown from the start! I left with much more experience and determination than you! The future is mine! Thanks to the money from the submarine that I will hasten to resell, I will become a great pirate! I will finally be able to trample on this bullshit that is love and justice!

- Hey...

In a whisper, I question Bacca:

- Is that the piracy you dream of for you?

- Of course! Theft, murder, domination! That's all that, being a pirate! Live freely! Kill freely! Happiness!

- In your eyes, freedom therefore comes down to these principles ...

- Eh? Obviously, I do not see why you ask the question. Live for and by his desires! Binge on the same stuff! If that's not freedom, then what is it? I am strong! This is why I am able to make my wildest wishes come true! That's a great pirate!

- If you say so.

In my heart of hearts, I calm myself down.

The fear of being killed, the anxiety of losing against Bacca, everything has disappeared. Aah, I think I was really on the wrong track. Of course, this man is more resolute than ever. Certainly, he seems determined to achieve whatever costs his desires. And until then, I have been crushed by this determination. Because I felt that by postponing the fulfillment of Cora's dearest wish and my own desires "later", I was worth less than Bacca. But the reality is quite different.

"Now" or "later", all this makes no sense until it is a question of "true freedom". I don't know what freedom really is and, to be frank, that's not even my ideal. Nevertheless, I am sure of one thing: this freedom that Corazon wanted me is certainly not as bad as the one Bacca speaks of. I also

know that living by crushing others, at the sole option of one's desires, has absolutely nothing to do with any "true freedom".

Finally, that's it, I feel that I have made up my mind. Decided to reduce to pulp the ugly freedom that the enemy who is in front of me keeps telling me about. I calm my breathing and get up.

- Hmm? Are you mobilizing your last strength? Good very good! However you want! I'll finish you off once and for all! Ghe pa pa pa!

When I turn to Bacca, he is already in an attack position.

- Say your prayers, brats! Melty love!

His mouth emits a new ray. But I am not afraid so far. This whole room is still under the effect of my Room.

- Shambles!

I throw the hilt of my saber forward and use my power.

In less time than it takes to tell, the handle and the large rock in the room are swapping. As expected, the Bacca ray hits the rock head-on.

- Ah! That's not what will stop me, because my Melty love has the power to do everything ... fon ... Why does it not melt ?!

The ray suddenly vanished around the center of the rock. I take the opportunity to jump over it and slip into his lap.

- You were saying that the power of your acid consumes a significant part of your energy, eh? If this had been your first shot, I would have melted with the rock. But when I saw the hole caused by your ray shrinking, I understood. Your power is no longer the same as at the start.

- And ... So what ?! It doesn't change the fact that I still have the advantage ...

- Yes, it's true. If I had no more means of attacking, you would indeed have won.

Physical attacks do not damage him. The only valid option I have in mind is to attempt an offense with Wolf's electric saber. And it is not because the latter broke that I am no longer able to use the electric. I know it, I can feel it.

I then direct all my knowledge, my entire awareness, to the thumb of my right hand. I concentrate all the electricity in my body towards this inch, then I condense it and finally amplify it.

- You and your low-level determination, I won't let you defeat me. If I bowed to a guy who only has money and power, Cora would never forgive me.

I hear a crackle, as if something is about to explode. My thumb starts to glow, I can feel the electricity overflowing. This blow will be the last.

- No wait!

- Take that ... Counter shock!

I reach forward with my right hand and plant my electrified thumb in Bacca. a powerful current pours into all its liquefied body.

- Ghe pa pa pa pa pa pa!

An explosion of light. Followed by the sound of roasting meat. Without a single word, Bacca collapses.

- Ended.

The winner is designated. The people of Pleasure Town will soon be released from the Trocadero power spell. Only I won't be able to move right away. I sit down on the floor and breathe a deep sigh of relief.

I see Wolf, who by pure chance, has just regained consciousness, walking in my direction. Ah, no, it is not towards me that he is advancing. The old man walks over to his son, sits down next to him and takes out a dagger he had hidden in his inside pocket. Then, with the same gesture, he brandished it above Bacca's chest.

- Stopped.

Just as he is about to bring down his gun, I grab his arm.

- Let me go, Law.

- Are you planning to kill him?

- Yes.

- He is completely unconscious, no need to do more.

- I am responsible because twenty years ago, as well as today, the city as a whole and its inhabitants were exposed to serious danger. It is my duty to repair the damage they have suffered. This is why you have to let me go.

- Out of the question.

Chapter 35

Honestly, I don't know what Wolf is thinking at this precise moment.

How guilty does he feel? Is it plagued by contradictions? To suffering? I have absolutely no idea. Is it always that ...

- Him and you, you are from the same family.

Something deep inside me tells me that I absolutely must not let go of his hand.

- No matter what bastard he has become, Bacca remains your son. This is amply sufficient reason in my eyes not to kill him. My benefactor was shot by his own brother. So stop, I never want to see members of the same family kill each other again!

Wolf remains silent. Having nothing more to add, I also shut up. Soon Wolf drops his dagger from my hand. He covers his face with both hands and lets his tears flow. It's the first time I've seen the

old man cry like this.

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- Law! Wolf!

When Wolf finally manages to dry his tears, Bepo's group enters the room in a sorry state.

- Oh puree, the three of you look terrible.

- You're not better, Law, replies Bepo, laughing.

Shachi gets excited:

- Frankly, you should have seen what we put on him!

"The most important thing is that we are all safe and sound," Penguin adds with a smile.

Yes, and above all:

- We won a great victory.

With these words, we congratulate each other by clapping each other's hands. Then everything goes very quickly. After having come to their senses, the inhabitants tumble into the temple with Rad at their head and tie Bacca and Boackenno securely with ropes and chains.

- You saved us, Rad thanks us, glancing in our direction.

- Oh, it's nothing, we acted on a whim, I answer.

A few hours later, soldiers of the Navy that had been warned arrived at the temple and took the two scoundrels away.

With their departure, the battle really comes to an end. But this does not mean that a party is organized in our honor.

Without asking our opinion, they make the decision to hospitalize us all in the crowd. A good week for a full recovery. Not even the time to enjoy the euphoria of victory. In addition, as the doctor suspects that we risk getting brindle if we are together, he puts us all in separate rooms.

I tell myself that I will be seriously bored. Except that in the end, I make good use of the long hours available to think. While I am lying alone in my bed, I think about a lot of things. What do I want to accomplish "now"? What should I do?

When I left, I made a solid decision.

- Yahou! We're back home! cries Penguin excitedly.

After a week of hospitalization, Rad walked the five of us home.

- And voila, it's time to resume the good old habits, says Bepo.

- Yes, you're right, I retort as naturally as possible. Hey, the old man?

- Mh, what? You are hungry?

- No that's not it. I would like to talk to you about something.

- OK, no problem.

We leave the house and walk towards the nearby fields.

A few snowflakes are falling and the wind is cold.

- It's been three years, Wolf realizes. I took you in first, then three other kids ... My daily life has become so noisy ...

- Eh eh! The world is thus made! People who are too good always get their money's worth.

- Maybe, but in the end, I had a good time. Before that, and for a very long time, I had never imagined myself sharing such lively meals at several.

- Stop, you'll make me cry.

- Tell me, Law, you intend to leave the island, don't you?

- !!

- Tss ... I haven't been pretending to take care of you all this time, you know. I've watched you enough to know that if you're asking me to follow you outside, it's to talk to me about something important.

- Old man...

- Mh ...

- I decided to go to sea. To become a pirate. To gain experience, to become strong and to grant Cora's wish. I will never become like Bacca. I will be a pirate who does not deny his convictions, a pirate who will not disappoint you.

- Oh good, if you say so.

- You don't oppose it?

- The world of pirates is a terrifying world. Between the stormy seas, the lack of water and food, the clashes between saguinaire adversaries and the quarrels even within the crew, there is no lack of reasons for some to see their good intentions warned ... Bacca is in it. the perfect example. If you tell me you're making an informed decision, then I won't try to change your mind.

Wolf has a soft voice. He gives me the impression of a father who gives his child his last advice for a good start in life.

- Since you saved me the day, old man, I got plenty of new things. First of all, I made some friends. Then you taught me how much life is worth living. Despite everything, if I have nothing to reproach with my daily life, I know that deep in my heart remains a dark "deposit" inherited from the past. The hatred I harbor for Doflamingo, as well as the haste to make Cora's dearest wish come true, keep remind me of this.

- The hatred and sadness that we once carried within ourselves do not disappear overnight. I am in a good place to talk about them, because I have been carrying them around for twenty years.

- If I continue to live this way, I feel that I will never get better. I always thought that I would have to go "someday" to Dressrosa for my problem to be resolved. But during my fight against Bacca,

I realized that I wanted to understand what "true freedom" was. Today I have to try to understand what Cora wanted to say to me. This is the reason why I am going to go to sea now and not later. I have a duty to.

Once I am done speaking, we just sat there for a while in the undergrowth. Without telling us anything. We silently watch the snow fall, and small accumulate.

- When do you plan to talk to them?

- Tonight. I don't know how they will react, but I intend to ask them if they want to follow me or not.

- And the departure, when do you precede it?

- Within a week. Until then, I still have a few things to do on the island. I have to say goodbye to the locals, as well as to those who have treated me particularly well. I am thinking in particular of the doctor and Rad.

- You won't be ... too sad? Wolf asks me, looking away. I know you liked this town. It's gonna be hard, though, right?

- It's not that I have a heart of stone, but I don't want my feelings to be a brake on my progress.

- OK, I understand ... It's cooling off, don't you think? Let's go home.

- Hey, old man, you never thought of becoming a pirate again?

- I'm staying here. In the end, I enjoy this island as well as this city. I go about my business, I work with all my ardor on my inventions and I sometimes go out for a walk. I lead a life that suits me well. The adventures of pirates, I leave them to the young people that you are. Kah kah kah kah!

With a calm and assertive step, Wolf sets off. I walk behind him, slightly behind him. I had other things to say to him, but until the end, I could not find the adequate words.

That same evening, after having dinner and back in our room, I decided to speak to Penguin and the others. I expected them to be surprised, but they received the news calmly.

"Lately, Law, it was enough to watch you to guess that you were up to something. Your pirate story surprised me a bit, but I'm not upset, Bepo admits.

Chapter 36

- I'll be leaving the island in a week. And you, what do you want to do?

I ask them the question, trying to stay as natural as possible.

- I'm not forcing you to do anything. You can very well go on living the same life, eating with the old man and exchanging jokes and continuing your work in town. Only, if ... if ever, you ... you wanted to come, then ... that ... that would help me a lot ...

I who wanted my invitation to pass like a letter in the mail, I finally stumbled over all the words. The speech I gave them smacked of embarrassment and jitters.

- I'm coming! I'm going to sea with you, Law. I studied the methods of navigation, I became stronger thanks to my feet-fist techniques, and it's been a long time that I think of going "someday" in search of my big brother ... But you know me, I lack character and I will never decide to take the plunge. That's why it's now or never! With you! To accomplish the goals I have set for myself!

At these words, I let out a small smile. To hear Bepo confess to me all that he has on his heart fills me with joy.

- I'm also going!

- Same for me!

Penguin and Shachi answer me in turn, suddenly.

- After the death of our parents, Shachi and I fell very low ... But thanks to Wolf and to you, we regained a taste for life, and today we enjoy every day. Only, Law, your words have more than aroused my curiosity! Just thinking about what awaits us outside this island, beyond the seas, I already can't stand still! This is why I decided to accompany you!

- Me, it's the same as for Penguin. How to say? At the end of our fight against Boackenno, when we defeated him, I felt so good! So of course, I was scared and I knew that the slightest mistake would cost us our lives, but I finally understood that I too could do great things! It is for this reason that I want to go on an adventure! With you guys. And meet that something that will change my life!

Penguin and Shachi's lyrics come straight from the heart, there's no doubt about it. Reason why I have no other choice than to believe in them.

- Alright, I know I can count on you.

See everything I say.

- How do we do it for the boat? Penguin asks me.

- I'll go get one in town.

- You might as well not do things halfway and take a big one straight away! One of those who can accommodate a hundred sailors!

- Like we had enough money. A small boat will be more than enough for the four of us.

We then continue to discuss at length about the ship of our dreams.

"But tell me, Law," Shachi calls out in a small voice. Wolf is going to find himself all alone, right?

- Too bad for him. He has his own goals to accomplish. And life is also about learning to leave those you love. There's nothing we can do about it.

- If you say so...

No matter how I speak, I have as much vagueness in my soul as Shachi. But at the same time, I feel it, I must not remain captive of this kind of feeling. We then go to Wolf's room to tell him that we will all be leaving the island. "Ah, okay" are his only words. Then I go back to my own room and fall asleep without thinking about anything.

The following week unfolds like all the others. We get up in the morning, have breakfast all together, then Wolf goes to work in his lab and we in town. After making our respected colleagues aware of the current circumstances, we work twice as hard to thank them for all they have done for us. In the evening, we go home, heckle like crazy again, and go to bed, exhausted. During this week, no one talks about piracy. At the very most, we buy a cheap wooden ship, to take to the sea. Wolf, Bepo, Penguin, Shachi and I make the most of every moment we spend together laughing and arguing over trifles, like that. has been the case so far.

The day before our departure, Wolf summons us to his laboratory. We go there after finishing our working day and saying goodbye to all those who have taken so much care of us.

- Ah, there you are.

- What do we owe the honor of being summoned here? Ah! Don't tell me you're planning to use us for one of your weird experiences before we set sail ?!

- Idiot! Do you take me for a mad scientist, or what ?! Come on, follow me, instead of telling shit!

We descend the stairs after him and arrive in the cave. Once the lights are on, we see the yellow submarine moored in the same place as the last time. For a machine having smashed the earth in two in order to enter the temple, I find the hull in relatively good condition.

At this point, I realize that something has changed about his appearance.

A large skull, this symbol that pirates proudly wear, is drawn on its fuselage.

- What...

Impossible for me to hide my astonishment.

- Mister Junk, what does that mean ?!

- Sitting at the table in the middle of the night, you often think of a symbol for your pirate flag, right?

- Co ... How do you know that?

- Hmm, nothing could be easier. I found several of your drafts in the trash. In the discreet genre, we do better. I also know that on this symbol, precisely, you wrote in red: "Adopt!"

- Wow, seriously ... But that's not the problem! I ask you why this symbol is drawn on your submarine ?!

Wolf smirked at me.

- A pirate ship without the symbol that goes well, it's not very chic, is it?

- Eh?

- Law, Bepo, Shachi, Penguin, I ask you to accept this ship. Originally, I built and equipped this submarine with the idea of going on new adventures. This is why I would like you to take it with you, so that maybe you can make part of my dream come true.

- You ... are you sure?

- Pooh! I don't want to have a bad conscience when I hear one day that you died because your wooden boat sank. Take this as a gift from me.

The service he is rendering us is too great. How are we going to pay it off someday? But for now, I tell myself that it is our duty to accept his gesture of benevolence.

- OK, if that makes you happy. We cannot refuse the request of an old man at the end of his life.

- That's it, make fun of yourself. But know that I still have fifty years at least! Until then, focus on not ending up in fish food!

- Kah kah kah kah! Wolf ends with a laugh.

The eyes sparkling with joy, Shachi, Bepo and Penguin do not take their eyes off the submarine.

- Now that the inventor of genius that I am has entrusted you with his masterpiece, you have a duty to become perfect pirates aboard "Hanamaru the invin ..."

- It's devide, we'll call it "Polar Tang"!

I cap Wolf at the pole and propose the first name that crosses my mind without letting him finish his sentence.

- Too classy!

- Awesome!

- It rocks!

Big success for my proposal.

- Band of wretches !! How dare you baptize "Hanamaru the invincible" with such a name ... also ... aaah ... no, nothing. After all, it's your machine, do what you want with it. Um, "Polar Tang" ... Yeah, not so bad for a kid ...

A half-annoyed, half-cheerful expression floats over Wolf's face.

- Thanks, Mister Junk, we'll make good use of it.

- You're welcome. I am counting on you to show the greatness of my genius to the whole world.

With these beautiful words, we join our fists.

The day of departure arrives.

I open the curtains, it's not snowing and I see the sun up in the sky. A perfect day to go to sea. Many inhabitants must be present to wish us good luck. We all have breakfast together, as usual, and then leave the house. Then we go to the laboratory where we board the "Polar Tang" so that Wolf teaches us the basics of piloting, before transporting the ship to Pleasure Town where we submerge it. Along the way, we leave the submarine to greet the inhabitants one last time. Contrary to all expectations, Rad is the one who cries the most.

- Bouaaah! These little moms who have become so strong are about to go on an adventure! I don't care if it was to become pirates! I have never been so moved by my life!

Chapter 37

I had no idea that Rad had a tear so easy. To tell the truth, I still don't know a lot about this city. I could have spent so many good times, shared so many laughs with these people, not forgetting those things that they could still have taught me. Despite this, we are going on a journey. We push our ship towards the vast expanse of oceans.

- Let's go, guys.

I let them know that the departure is imminent and join the deck of the ship. Wolf is no longer with us. He is with the inhabitants, remained on the quay, preferring to say goodbye to us rather than to take part in the journey. The time for farewells has come.

- Thanks for everything, old man. Try to stay alive as long as possible!

I throw these words at him from the bridge. In turn, Bepo, Shachi and Penguin each address a few words of thanks. That's it ... Is that all? I have the impression of having made a mistake somewhere. This weight on my chest, it does not disappear. Words ... I need more words …

- Law, I put the ship underway, announces Bepo behind my back.

- Understood.

The submarine begins to move and slowly pulls away from the coast. This is the moment that Wolf chooses for a laugh:

- Law! Penguin! Shachi! Bepo! I had fun!

As he launches these words at us with the greatest naturalness, I hear myself shout:

- Wolf!

This is the first time that I have called my friend by name.

- Law, you ...

- You are not cheating if you think that I do not feel anything! As if I could not be sad to leave you! You, more than anyone else !!

There are words for which one does not need to put the forms, nor to feel ashamed. Words that must be sent to their recipient at all costs. Words I want Mister Junk to hear.

- Thanks, Wolf! Thank you for the kindness you have shown during all this time! Even if we are separated! Even if we don't see each other again! You will forever be my greatest friend !!

This useless stuff that runs from the eyes, you know what, gives me a little hoarse voice at the end. Suddenly, Bepo emerges from the cockpit. I see that he and the other two have their faces pressed to the ground and their fists clenched against their eyelids.

- Have a good trip, you dirty kids! Discover the world! Learn what freedom is! Me, I ... I have been happy all this time by your side! Wolf shouts at us, raising his right hand.

In our turn, we raise our hands as high as possible. Then we turn our backs to him. We won't be looking back.

- Bepo, go back to your cockpit position.

- Right now.

The ship sets off again and the coast is visibly moving away. We have become pirates. From now on, we will have to live on our own, to obtain what we want ourselves. When I walk into the cockpit with Shachi and Penguin, a precise symbol suddenly springs to mind.

- A heart.

- What?

Yes, I only see this symbol to designate our crew. The love I received from Cora, the tenderness that Wolf showed towards me, and the trust I place in my comrades. What better than the word "heart" to bring together all these elements?

- We are the crew of the "Heart" !!

Superb sky. Favorable wind direction. No need to shed more tears for this ideal start. Turns to "now", we move forward. Convinced that at the end of the road a dazzling freedom awaits us.

Epilogue

Early in the morning, when the sparrows start to sing, an old man appears on the beach who has come to do a little exercise. He begins by stretching the muscles in his upper body, continues with those of the lower part, then rolls up and unrolls the shoulders before performing a few short jumps.

Movements that he must perform conscientiously every morning to then move and carry out without too much difficulty the many daily tasks that await him.

Every morning the old man gets up at a fixed time and prepares his breakfast of eggs and ham. Then, after doing some outdoor activity, he walks to the greenhouse where he grows vegetables to see if they are growing properly. When he finished, he took charge of his laboratory where he worked hard on his inventions until sunset.

While he continues to design new machines, he also works regularly to improve older ones. This is for example the case of "Super cleaner No. 13" which he touched up about a year ago, allowing him today not to sacrifice any more of his precious time in the household. Just turn on the "No. 13" and it will clean the whole house thoroughly without leaving the slightest trace of dust. The old man struggles to hide his satisfaction at this invention worthy of the greatest geniuses.

Back home, he prepares his dinner which he eats alone at his table. If the people of the city have already advised him to take a cat to overcome his loneliness, the main person is playing deaf ears. In his eyes, dining alone and in peace is far from lacking in charm. After washing the dishes and taking his bath, he goes to his bedroom, turns off the light and falls asleep.

Once a week, he goes to town to stock up on food and parts necessary for his work as an inventor. He is appreciated by everyone there, to such an extent that it happens from time to time that a small crowd is created around him. And although many inhabitants offer him to come and live among them, he persists in refusing.

The old man is living peaceful days. However, to say that he never feels alone would be a lie. Because his dining table used to be a pretty bustling place. It was noisy, tumultuous, but we ate there in a warm atmosphere.

Since that time, many changes have taken place, those operating on the physical plane being certainly the most obvious, he sometimes has back pain. So much so that he can no longer do without his stretching at the start and end of the day. Despite this, he never complains and does not let out unnecessary sighs. He knows very well that he would be the beloved of the "others" if they saw him give up for so little.

When he finished his morning exercises, as he struggled to get home, he saw a man approaching on a bicycle. Holding in his hand a wad of leaves that he waves, the latter calls out to the old man with a certain excitement.

- He Wolf! It's incredible!

- What is it, Rad? You make a racket of it in the morning.

- Shut up and look at this instead! The newspaper and the research notices that go with it! "They" are on the front page!

- Hmm ...

The old man retrieves the newspaper from the hands of his friend who is struggling to catch his breath. The expression on his face remains the same, but he gestures swiftly with his hands. He puts his glasses back on his nose and fixes his gaze on the photo in the newspaper.

Aah, it's "them" in the picture.

In the article, the events are described as follows: for some years now, a gang of pirates have been weaning on North Blue who kidnapped young people and children with the aim of selling them as slaves. Their untimely changes of lair made it difficult for the Navy to get their hands on them, not forgetting the fact that they were battle-hardened and doc difficult to defeat. But the previous week, a crew of pirates by the name of "Heart" had suddenly appeared at the bandits' lair before crushing them without them being able to offer the slightest resistance. The prisoners were released unharmed and then all returned to their families. "I acted on a whim!" These were the only words the captain of the crew of the "Heart" had uttered before resuming the sea aboard his submarine.

In the newspaper, a photo immortalizing the two crews is printed in bulk. It was reportedly taken by one of the prisoners with a camera placed within reach.

We can see a young man covered in a fur hat, sporting a large tattoo on the chest, displaying a terrifying face and raising his saber in the direction of the enemy. On reading the article, the photo alone is enough to capture the power that emanates from this man. Another shot represents those who can be considered to be the other members of the crew. Some dressed in headgear, women and men with massive build, as well as among others a strange polar bear. Surrounded by a multitude of enemies, none of them seem to be afraid, and all give the impression of fighting with prodigious valor.

- It is beautiful, this photo, right? We see immediately that the Pirates of the "Heart" have been remarkably successful.

Ah ah ah, when I think that it is our little kids who have become so strong, it makes me feel good ...

- It's not over soon, right?! You are not going to start whining!

- From ... Sorry ... But, Wolf, it must still make you happy to see that "they" are all well, eh?

- Pah! I never worried about them! I remind you that I shaped them. What would worry me would be to learn that they are behind their pirate colleagues. I also remind you that "piracy" is synonymous with "risking your life". So if they die, it will be knowingly.

- Phew, I find you a little harsh, anyway .... Although, it looks quite like you ...

- What you can annoy me when you do, Rad. If that's all you had to tell me, I invite you to get back to work. I may not look like it, but I have my work cut out for me.

- OK, I understand. Don't forget to come and say hello to me at the station the next time you're in town.

With these words, the man gets back on his bike and takes the road to the city.

The old man, meanwhile, once again stares at the newspaper in front of him. Unlike earlier, excitement seems to run through his eyes. He then examines the wanted notices that the man has read. A boy - no, a young man rather - whose face is familiar to him, has a daring smile on one of the notices.

Time has passed since that time.

Aware that water has flowed under the bridges, he could not however say exactly how many years have passed. The only thing he can be sure of is that this lively life he was leading now belongs to a distant past.

He remembers everything.

The discovery of the boy in the cave, his return home in the company of a polar bear, the day he took two young runaways under his wing, the time when he himself had an accident and where these young people had him saves life, the surprise attack they led together aboard the same ship against pirates, their voctory at the risk of their lives, when the boy prevented him from killing his own son. Everything, he remembers everything. His memory remains intact and each of these memories comes back to him in its most vivid colors.

As he glances through the other wanted notices, snow begins to fall. The old man is dazzled by the gorged flakes of sunlight. He walks towards the shore and looks far towards the horizon line, beyond which he discerns the silhouette of young people.

He sees them, aboard their yellow submarine, traverse the vastness of the oceans. A perilous journey during which the slightest mistake can prove fatal. This does not prevent them from smiling, however.

At this thought, he felt warmth invade him and courage born in him. The ardor to carry on the rest of his life runs through his veins and oozes from every pore of his skin. There is no question of losing against "them". He still has work to do, great inventions to build. But it's strange, all the same. This body which seemed so heavy to him a few moments ago is now filled with vitality, incredibly light, as if it had just found a second youth.

His loneliness has simply evaporated. The old man is able to imagine them again.

He sees the young man with tattoos courageously healing a wounded man.

He sees the one in the cap humming while cutting the hair of his comrade wearing a hat with the word "Penguin" inscribed on it.

He also notices a large polar bear whose face indicates that it is maneuvering their ship headlong into the storm.

Aah, that's more than enough for him.

As long as "they" lead the life "they" were made for, the old man asks for nothing more. Nevertheless...

- You hear me?!

He howls with all his might towards the sea.

- Here, everything is fine! I have busy hours and I have happy days! What about your rating ?! Do you have a smile on your lips? Are you living the bomb chest ?! Are you getting closer ... to "true freedom" ?!

Despite the lack of response to his calls, an expression of contentment seems to animate the old man.

Because he is convinced that one fine day, when his "friends" will have found this "true freedom" to which they aspire, they will return, their faces resplendent with joy, to surround the table in his dining room.

- Hmm ... I'm not sentimental enough for that, he murmurs as he walks back home with a nimble and joyful step, letting a soft warm smile appear on his face.

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A yellow ship floats in the waters of North Blue.

A banquet takes place on the bridge where many people are agitated and make a great noise.

Among them, the young man in the fur hat, the one in the cap, another in the hat with "Penguin" written on it and the talking polar bear are all four gathered in a corner, devouring a gigantic piece of meat. A meat that comes from a crocodile over twenty meters long hunting on the island where they stopped over a few hours before. The fight against this wild beast that would have crushed any human normally constituted had been for them a mere formality.

Right in the middle of the banquet, a flight of swallows suddenly crosses the sky. At the same time, the four accomplices discern like a voice.

- Say, guys, didn't you hear something? asks the young man in the fur hat.

- You too, Captain? I had the impression that it came from the other side of the ocean.

This response from the boy in the cap does not fail to titillate the curiosity of the polar bear who hastens to grab his telescope to take a look into the distance.

- I do not perceive any enemy in the surroundings ... But I am like you, I also heard a voice, adds the polar bear without ceasing to scan the horizon.

"It was a familiar voice, tinged with a hint of nostalgia," the boy in the "Penguin" hat said in turn, letting out a slight sneer.

The same mischievous smile then crosses the face of the young man in the fur hat that the others call "Captain", as if the latter had not needed to speak to understand the meaning of the words made by his friend.

- Yes, I agree with you.

Listening to the twittering of the swallows, the young man remembers past events.

He has come a long way, both geographically and temporally, since he chose the path of piracy and now leads a life of adventure. Impossible for him to return regularly to his past, he does not have time. As Captain of a pirate crew, he must pull his comrades forward and take a front line position when the time comes for battle. He saw every moment thoroughly, as if it were the last.

Now that the name of the crew is known and recognized, the heads of a large part of the members are being put at a price. What constitutes in the eyes of the young man a certain pride. In the future, he will continue his journey alongside his friends while exposing himself to danger on a daily basis. Carelessness no longer has its place.

But there are still memories that he should not forget.

The memory of the benefactor who saved his life and then taught him what love was. Then this old man with whom, by a happy combination of circumstances, he became friends.

The hours he spent by their side will forever remain in his heart like the warmest memories.

If he thinks of the old man, it may be because he heard the song of the swallows. Does he lead a quiet life? Is he not behaving like an irresponsible person? Is he immersed in his inventions to the point of forgetting to eat? Does he maintain good relations with the inhabitants of the city? The reasons to be concerned are almost endless.

"Aah, what I would like to see him again," he whispers in his heart. He no longer counts the times he has thought of visiting his old friend since he went to sea. What a pleasure it would be to take the road to this island with his fellow pirates to organize a gigantic banquet in the company of the old man. Sometimes he gave in to this kind of reverie.

But unfortunately this is not possible. He cannot go back to this warm, so sweet past, because the, "now", he has things to accomplish. Enemies to beat countries to save, an immense sea on which to travel with his crew. He must keep moving forward, his eyes on the future. Today, that is what matters most.

Moreover, he still has not discovered what "true freedom" is. And he knows that the old man would give him hell if he ever dared to reappear in front of him without knowing what was going on.

- But hey, if I hang around too much, I run the risk that the old man will end up breaking his pipe, he whispers for himself alone.

- Mh, did you say something, Captain?

- Tell me, Bepo, do you trust your skills as a navigator?

- Uh, well ... uh, yes! Of course! I've been studying storms and heavy swells for so long that they no longer hold any secrets for me!

- Very well. Then the time is right.

- Pou ... For what?

Without answering the question, the young man gets up and walks towards the bow. All the crew members notice it and stop drinking.

- Hey, all of you! he shouts at them.

-I have decided what will be our next destination.

A great clamor arose among the crew. On the faces of each and everyone, the anguish of landing in a perilous place mingles with the excitement of living a new adventure.

- So, Captain, what direction do we take? asks the boy in the cap.

What the young man answers:

- That of Grand Line.

That's it, he did it. He said that name.

- Koaaaaa ?!

The whole crew is literally astonished. Nothing surprising about this, because they are all perfectly aware that the Grand Line is designed to be the route of all dangers. However, the shock quickly wears off to give way to resignation.

- Let's go!

- Yeah! I can't wait to give my all!

- I decided a long time ago to follow you wherever you go, Captain! So it's not now that I'm going to panic!

In turn, each member of the crew gives voice with enthusiasm.

- Do you hear, Cora? What you see there is my ... no, our crew!

- Hoist the sails! Point the road to follow! Crew of the "Heart", forward!

- Woooh !!

Charged with the dreams of all crew members, the yellow-colored ship is advancing in strong winds on the ocean.

Standing on the bridge, the young man stares at the blue expanse stretching out before his eyes, a slight smile on his lips.

He imagines. He imagines the harsh battles that lie ahead, as well as the joy that always accompanies them. He also thinks of all that remains for him to accomplish in order to reward his benefactors.

He is convinced of it. Convinced that once this time passes he will find somewhere, at a given moment, "true freedom".

- Take a good look, Cora. I promise to make your dearest wish come true!

This promise vanishes in the sound of the waves.

The culmination of the dream that the young man cherishes is still a long way off.